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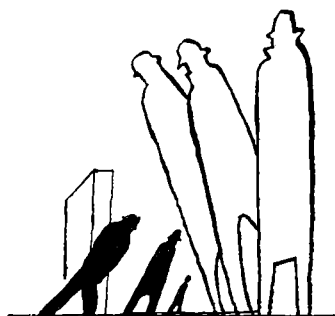






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Moscow  
Raduga Publishers  
1983

Составление и послесловие

Г. А. АНДЖАПАРИДЗЕ

Комментарии Е. С. БУРМИСТРОВА

Художник М. П. КЛЯЧКО

Редактор С. Б. БЕЛОВ

**Хемметт, Дэшил. ИЗБРАННОЕ.**  
Сборник. Сост. Г. А. Анджапаридзе. — На англ. яз. — М.: Радуга,  
1985. — 485 с.

Сборник знакомит читателя с творчеством одного из классиков американской детективной литературы Дэшила Хемметта (1894—1961), произведения которого отличаются не только остротой сюжета, но и критическим изображением американской действительности.

Издание включает послесловие и комментарии к тексту.

Рекомендуется всем знающим или изучающим английский язык.

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X  $\frac{4703000000-336}{031(05)-85}$  395—85

ISBN 5—05—000557—4

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# THE GLASS KEY



I. THE BODY IN CHINA STREET

I

Green dice rolled across the green table, struck the rim together, and bounced back. One stopped short holding six white spots in two equal uppermost. The other tumbled out to the center of the table and came to rest with a single spot on top.

Ned Beaumont grunted softly—"Uhn!"—and the winners cleared the table of money.

Harry Sloss picked up the dice and rattled them in a pale broad hairy hand. "Shoot two bits." He dropped a twenty-dollar bill and a five-dollar bill on the table.

Ned Beaumont stepped back saying: "Get on him, gamblers, I've got to refuel." He crossed the billiard-room to the door. There he met Walter Ivans coming in. He said, "'Lo, Walt," and would have gone on, but Ivans caught his elbow as he passed and turned to face him.

"D-d-did you t-talk to P-p-paul?" When Ivans said "P-p-paul" a fine spray flew out between his lips.

"I'm going up to see him now." Ivan's china-blue eyes brightened in his round fair face until Ned Beaumont, narrow of eye, added: "Don't expect much. If you could wait awhile."

Ivans's chin twitched. "B-b-but she's going to have the b-b-baby next month."

A startled look came into Ned Beaumont's dark eyes. He took his arm out of the shorter man's hand and stepped back. Then a corner of his mouth twitched under his dark mustache and he said: "It's a bad time, Walt, and--well--you'll save yourself disappointment by not looking for much before November." His eyes were narrow again and watchful.

"B-b-but if you t-tell him--"

"I'll put it to him as hot as I can and you ought to know he'll go the limit, but he's in a tough spot right now." He moved his shoulders and his face became gloomy except for the watchful brightness of his eyes.

Ivans wet his lips and blinked his eyes many times. He drew in a long breath and patted Ned Beaumont's chest with both hands. "G-g-go up now," he said in an urgent pleading voice. "I-I'll wait here f-for you."

1

Ned Beaumont went upstairs lighting a thin green-dappled cigar. At the second-floor landing, where the Governor's portrait hung, he turned towards the front of the building and knocked on the broad oaken door that shut off the corridor at that end.

When he heard Paul Madvig's "All right" he opened the door and went in.

Paul Madvig was alone in the room, standing at the window, with his hands in his trousers-pockets, his back to the door, looking through the screen down into dark China Street.

He turned around slowly and said: "Oh, here you are." He was a man of forty-five, tall as Ned Beaumont, but forty pounds heavier without softness. His hair was light, parted in the middle, and brushed flat to his head. His face was handsome in a ruddy stout-featured way. His clothes were saved from flashiness by their quality and by his manner of wearing them. Ned Beaumont shut the door and said: "Lend me some money,"

From his inner coat-pocket Madvig took a large brown wallet. "What do you want?"

"Couple of hundred."

Madvig gave him a hundred-dollar bill and five twenties, asking: "Craps?"

"Thanks." Ned Beaumont pocketed the money. "Yes."

"It's a long time since you've done any winning, isn't it?" Madvig asked as he returned his hands to his trousers-pockets.

"Not so long—a month or six weeks."

Madvig smiled. "That's a long time to be losing."

"Not for me." There was a faint note of irritation in Ned Beaumont's voice.

Madvig rattled coins in his pocket. "Much of a game tonight?" He sat on a corner of the table and looked down at his glistening brown shoes.

Ned Beaumont looked curiously at the blond man, then shook his head and said: "Peewee." He walked to the window. Above the buildings on the opposite side of the street the sky was black and heavy. He went behind Madvig to the telephone and called a number. "Hello, Bernie. This is Ned. What's the price on Peggy O'Toole? . . . Is that all? . . . Well, give me five hundred of each. . . . Sure. . . . I'm betting it's going to rain and if it does she'll beat Incinerator. . . . All right, give me a better price then. . . . Right." He put the receiver on its prong and came around in front of Madvig again.

Madvig asked: "Why don't you try laying off awhile when you hit one of these sour streaks?"

Ned Beaumont scowled. "That's no good, only spreads it out. I ought to've put that fifteen hundred on the nose instead of spreading it across the board. Might as well take your punishment and get it over with."

Madvig chuckled and raised his head to say: "If you can stand the gaff."

Ned Beaumont drew down the ends of his mouth, the ends of his mustache following them down. "I can stand anything I've got to stand," he said as he moved towards the door.



He had his hand on the door-knob when Madvig said, earnestly: "I guess you can, at that, Ned."

Ned Beaumont turned around and asked, "Can what?" fretfully.

Madvig transferred his gaze to the window. "Can stand anything," he said.

Ned Beaumont studied Madvig's averted face. The blond man stirred uncomfortably and moved coins in his pockets again. Ned Beaumont made his eyes blank and asked in an utterly puzzled tone: "Who?"

Madvig's face flushed. He rose from the table and took a step towards Ned Beaumont. "You go to hell," he said.

Ned Beaumont laughed.

Madvig grinned sheepishly and wiped his face with a green-bordered handkerchief. "Why haven't you been out to the house?" he asked. "Mom was saying last night she hadn't seen you for a month."

"Maybe I'll drop in some night this week."

"You ought to. You know how Mom likes you. Come for supper." Madvig put his handkerchief away.

Ned Beaumont moved towards the door again, slowly, watching the blond man from the ends of his eyes. With his hand on the knob he asked: "Was that what you wanted to see me about?"

Madvig frowned. "Yes, that is—" He cleared his throat. "Uh—oh—there's something else." Suddenly his diffidence was gone, leaving him apparently tranquil and self-possessed. "You know more about this stuff than I do. Miss Henry's birthday's Thursday. What do you think I ought to give her?"

Ned Beaumont took his hand from the door-knob. His eyes, by the time he was facing Madvig squarely again, had lost their shocked look. He blew cigar-smoke out and asked: "They're having some kind of birthday doings, aren't they?"

"Yes."

"You invited?"

Madvig shook his head. "But I'm going there to dinner tomorrow night."

Ned Beaumont looked down at his cigar, then up at Madvig's face again, and asked: "Are you going to back the Senator, Paul?"

"I think we will."

Ned Beaumont's smile was mild as his voice when he put his next question: "Why?"

Madvig smiled. "Because with us behind him he'll snow Roan under and with his help we can put over the whole ticket just like nobody was running against us."

Ned Beaumont put his cigar in his mouth. He asked, still mildly: "Without you"—he stressed the pronoun—"behind him could the Senator make the grade this time?"

Madvig was calmly positive. "Not a chance."

Ned Beaumont, after a little pause, asked: "Does he know that?"

"He ought to know it better than anybody else. And if he didn't know it—What the hell's the matter with you?"

Ned Beaumont's laugh was a sneer. "If he didn't know it," he suggested, "you wouldn't be going there to dinner tomorrow night?"

Madvig, frowning, asked again: "What the hell's the matter with you?"

Ned Beaumont took the cigar from his mouth. His teeth had bitten the end of it into shredded ruin. He said: "There's nothing the matter with me." He put thoughtfulness on his face: "You don't think the rest of the ticket needs his support?"

"Support's something no ticket can get too much of," Madvig replied carelessly, "but without his help we could manage to hold up our end all right."

"Have you promised him anything yet?"

Madvig pursed his lips. "It's pretty well settled."

Ned Beaumont lowered his head until he was looking up under his brows at the blond man. His face had become pale. "Throw him down, Paul," he said in a low husky voice. "Sink him."

Madvig put his fists on his hips and exclaimed softly and incredulously: "Well, I'll be damned!"

Ned Beaumont walked past Madvig and with unsteady thin fingers mashed the burning end of his cigar in the hammered copper basin on the table.

Madvig stared at the younger man's back until he straightened and turned. Then the blond man grinned at him with affection and exasperation. "What gets into you, Ned?" he complained. "You go along fine for just so long and then for no reason at all you throw an ing-bing. I'll be a dirty so-and-so if I can make you out!"

Ned Beaumont made a grimace of distaste. He said, "All right, forget it," and immediately returned to the attack with a skeptical question: "Do you think he'll play ball with you after he's re-elected?"

Madvig was not worried. "I can handle him."

"Maybe, but don't forget he's never been licked at anything in his life."

Madvig nodded in complete agreement. "Sure, and that's one of the best reasons I know for throwing in with him."

"No, it isn't, Paul," Ned Beaumont said earnestly. "It's the very worst. Think that over even if it hurts your head. How far has this dizzy blonde daughter of his got her hooks into you?"

Madvig said: "I'm going to marry Miss Henry."

Ned Beaumont made a whistling mouth, though he did not whistle. He made his eyes smaller and asked: "Is that part of the bargain?"

Madvig grinned boyishly. "Nobody knows it yet," he replied, "except you and me."

Spots of color appeared in Ned Beaumont's lean cheeks. He smiled his nicest smile and said: "You can trust me not to go around bragging about it and here's a piece of advice. If that's what you want, make them put it in writing and swear to it before a notary and post a cash bond, or, better still, insist on the wedding before election-day. Then you'll at least be sure of your pound of flesh, or she'll weigh around a hundred and ten, won't she?"

Madvig shifted his feet. He avoided Ned Beaumont's gaze

while saying: "I don't know why you keep talking about the Senator like he was a yegg. He's a gentleman and—"

"Absolutely. Read about it in the *Post*—one of the few aristocrats left in American politics. And his daughter's an aristocrat. That's why I'm warning you to sew your shirt on when you go to see them, or you'll come away without it, because to them you're a lower form of animal life and none of the rules apply."

Madvig sighed and began: "Aw, Ned, don't be so damned—"

But Ned Beaumont had remembered something. His eyes were shiny with malice. He said: "And we oughtn't to forget that young Taylor Henry's an aristocrat too, which is probably why you made Opal stop playing around with him. How's that going to work out when you marry his sister and he's your daughter's uncle-in-law or something? Will that entitle him to begin playing around with her again?"

Madvig yawned. "You didn't understand me right, Ned," he said. "I didn't ask for all this. I just asked you what kind of present I ought to give Miss Henry."

Ned Beaumont's face lost its animation, became a slightly sullen mask. "How far have you got with her?" he asked in a voice that expressed nothing of what he might have been thinking.

"Nowhere. I've been there maybe half a dozen times to talk to the Senator. Sometimes I see her and sometimes I don't, but only to say 'How do you do' or something with other people around. You know, I haven't had a chance to say anything to her yet."

Amusement glinted for a moment in Ned Beaumont's eyes and vanished. He brushed back one side of his mustache with a thumb-nail and asked: "Tomorrow's your first dinner there?"

"Yes, though I don't expect it to be the last."

"And you didn't get a bid to the birthday party?"

"No." Madvig hesitated. "Not yet."

"Then the answer's one you won't like."

Madvig's face was impassive. "Such as?" he asked.

"Don't give her anything."

"Oh, hell, Ned!"

Ned Beaumont shrugged. "Do whatever you like. You asked me."

"But why?"

"You're not supposed to give people things unless you're sure they'd like to get them from you."

"But everybody likes to—"

"Maybe, but it goes deeper than that. When you give somebody something, you're saying out loud that you know they'd like to have you give—"

"I got you," Madvig said. He rubbed his chin with fingers of his right hand. He frowned and said: "I guess you're right." His face cleared. He said: "But I'll be damned if I'll pass up the chance."

Ned Beaumont said quickly: "Well, flowers then, or something like that, might be all right."

"Flowers? Jesus! I wanted—"

"Sure, you wanted to give her a roadster or a couple of yards of pearls. You'll get your chance at that later. Start little and grow."

Madvig made a wry face. "I guess you're right, Ned. You know more about this kind of stuff than I do. Flowers it is."

"And not too many of them." Then, in the same breath: "Walt Ivans's telling the world you ought to spring his brother."

Madvig pulled the bottom of his vest down. "The world can tell him Tim's going to stay indoors till after election."

"You're going to let him stand trial?"

"I am," Madvig replied, and added with more heat: "You know damned well I can't help it, Ned. With everybody up for re-election and the women's clubs on the war-path it would be jumping in the lake to have Tim's case squared now."

Ned Beaumont grinned crookedly at the blond man and made his voice drawl. "We didn't have to do much worrying about women's clubs before we joined the aristocracy."

"We do now." Madvig's eyes were opaque.

"Tim's wife's going to have a baby next month," Ned Beaumont said.

Madvig blew breath out in an impatient gust. "Anything to make it tougher," he complained. "Why don't they think of those things before they get in trouble? They've got no brains, none of them."

"They've got votes."

"That's the hell of it," Madvig growled. He glowered at the floor for a moment, then raised his head. "We'll take care of him as soon as the votes are counted, but nothing doing till then."

"That's not going over big with the boys," Ned Beaumont said, looking obliquely at the blond man. "Brains or no brains, they're used to being taken care of."

Madvig thrust his chin out a little. His eyes, round and opaquely blue, were fixed on Ned Beaumont's. In a soft voice he asked: "Well?"

Ned Beaumont smiled and kept his voice matter-of-fact. "You know it won't take a lot of this to start them saying it was different in the old days before you put in with the Senator."

"Yes?"

Ned Beaumont stood his ground with no change in voice or smile. "You know how little of this can start them saying Shad O'Rory still takes care of his boys."

Madvig, who had listened with an air of complete attentiveness, now said in a very deliberately quiet voice: "I know you won't start them talking like that, Ned, and I know I can count on you to do your best to stop any of that kind of talk you happen to hear."

For a moment after that they stood silent, looking eye into eye, and there was no change in the face of either. Ned Beaumont ended the silence. He said: "It might help some if we took care of Tim's wife and the kid."

"That's the idea." Madvig drew his chin back and his eyes lost their opaqueness. "Look after it, will you? Give them everything."

### 3

Walter Ivans was waiting for Ned Beaumont at the foot of the stairs, bright-eyed and hopeful. "Wh-what did he s-say?"

"It's what I told you: no can do. After election Tim's to have anything he needs to get out, but nothing stirring till then."

Walter Ivans hung his head and made a low growling noise in his chest.

Ned Beaumont put a hand on the shorter man's shoulder and said: "It's a tough break and nobody knows it better than Paul, but he can't help himself. He wants you to tell her not to pay any bills. Send them to him—rent, grocer, doctor, and hospital."

Walter Ivans jerked his head up and caught Ned Beaumont's hand in both of his. "B-by G-god that's white of him!" The china-blue eyes were wet. "B-b-but I wish he could g-get Tim out."

Ned Beaumont said, "Well, there's always a chance that something will come up to let him," freed his hand, said, "I'll be seeing you," and went around Ivans to the billiard-room door.

The billiard-room was deserted.

He got his hat and coat and went to the front door. Long oyster-colored lines of rain slanted down into China Street. He smiled and addressed the rain under his breath: "Come down, you little darlings, thirty-two hundred and fifty dollars' worth of you."

He went back and called a taxicab.

#### 4

Ned Beaumont took his hands away from the dead man and stood up. The dead man's head rolled a little to the left, away from the curb, so that his face lay fully in the light from the corner street-lamp. It was a young face and its expression of anger was increased by the dark ridge that ran diagonally across the forehead from the edge of the curly fair hair to an eyebrow.

Ned Beaumont looked up and down China Street. As far up the street as the eye could see no person was there. Two blocks down the street, in front of the Log Cabin Club, two men were getting out of an automobile. They left the automobile standing in front of the Club, facing Ned Beaumont, and went into the Club.

Ned Beaumont, after staring down at the automobile for several seconds, suddenly twisted his head around to look up the street again and then, with a swiftness that made both movements one continuous movement, whirled and sprang upon the sidewalk in the shadow of the nearest tree. He was breathing through his mouth and though tiny points of sweat had glistened on his hands in the light he shivered now and turned up the collar of his overcoat.

He remained in the tree's shadow with one hand on the tree for perhaps half a minute. Then he straightened abruptly and began to walk towards the Log Cabin Club. He walked with increasing swiftness, leaning forward, and was moving at something more than a half-trot when he spied a man coming up the other side of the street. He immediately slackened his pace and made himself walk erect. The man entered a house before he came opposite Ned Beaumont.

By the time Ned Beaumont reached the Club he had stopped breathing through his mouth. His lips were still somewhat faded. He looked at the empty automobile without pausing, climbed the Club's steps between the two lanterns, and went indoors.

Harry Sloss and another man were crossing the foyer from the cloak-room. They halted and said together: "Hello, Ned." Sloss added: "I hear you had Peggy O'Toole today."

"Yes."

"For much?"

"Thirty-two hundred."

Sloss ran his tongue over his lower lip. "That's nice. You ought to be set for a game tonight."

"Later, maybe. Paul in?"

"I don't know. We just got in. Don't make it too late: I promised the girl I'd be home early."

Ned Beaumont said, "Right," and went over to the cloak-room. "Paul in?" he asked the attendant.

"Yes, about ten minutes ago."

Ned Beaumont looked at his wrist-watch. It was half past ten. He went up to the front second-story room. Madvig in din-



ner clothes was sitting at the table with a hand stretched out towards the telephone when Ned Beaumont came in.

Madvig withdrew his hand and said: "How are you, Ned?" His large handsome face was ruddy and placid.

Ned Beaumont said, "I've been worse," while shutting the door behind him. He sat on a chair not far from Madvig's. "How'd the Henry dinner go?"

The skin at the corners of Madvig's eyes crinkled. "I've been at worse," he said.

Ned Beaumont was clipping the end of a pale spotted cigar. The shakiness of his hands was incongruous with the steadiness of his voice asking: "Was Taylor there?" He looked up at Madvig without raising his head.

"Not for dinner. Why?"

Ned Beaumont stretched out crossed legs, leaned back in his chair, moved the hand holding his cigar in a careless arc, and said: "He's dead in a gutter up the street."

Madvig, unruffled, asked: "Is that so?"

Ned Beaumont leaned forward. Muscles tightened in his lean face. The wrapper of his cigar broke between his fingers with a thin crackling sound. He asked irritably: "Did you understand what I said?"

Madvig nodded slowly.

"Well?"

"Well what?"

"He was killed."

"All right," Madvig said. "Do you want me to get hysterical about it?"

Ned Beaumont sat up straight in his chair and asked: "Shall I call the police?"

Madvig raised his eyebrows a little. "Don't they know it?"

Ned Beaumont was looking steadily at the blond man. He replied: "There was nobody around when I saw him. I wanted to see you before I did anything. Is it all right for me to say I found him?"

Madvig's eyebrows came down. "Why not?" he asked blankly.

Ned Beaumont rose, took two steps towards the telephone, halted, and faced the blond man again. He spoke with slow emphasis: "His hat wasn't there."

"He won't need it now." Then Madvig scowled and said: "You're a God-damned fool, Ned."

Ned Beaumont said, "One of us is," and went to the telephone.

5

TAYLOR HENRY MURDERED  
BODY OF SENATOR'S SON FOUND  
IN CHINA STREET

Believed to have been the victim of a hold-up, Taylor Henry, 26, son of Senator Ralph Bancroft Henry, was found dead in China Street near the corner of Pamela Avenue at a few minutes after 10 o'clock last night.

Coroner William J. Hoops stated that young Henry's death was due to a fracture of the skull and concussion of the brain caused by hitting the back of his head against the edge of the curb after having been knocked down by a blow from a blackjack or other blunt instrument on his forehead.

The body is believed to have been first discovered by Ned Beaumont, 914 Randall Avenue, who went to the Log Cabin Club, two blocks away, to telephone the police; but before he had succeeded in getting Police Headquarters on the wire, the body had been found and reported by Patrolman Michael Smitt.

Chief of Police Frederick M. Rainey immediately ordered a wholesale round-up of all suspicious characters in the city and issued a statement to the effect that no stone will be left unturned in his effort to apprehend the murderer or murderers at once.

Members of Taylor Henry's family stated that he left his home on Charles Street at about half past nine o'clock to. . .

Ned Beaumont put the newspaper aside, swallowed the coffee that remained in his cup, put cup and saucer on the table beside his bed, and leaned back against the pillows. His face was tired and sallow. He pulled the covers up to his neck, clasped his hands together behind his head, and stared with dissatisfied eyes at the etching that hung between his bedroom-windows.

For half an hour he lay there with only his eyelids moving. Then he picked up the newspaper and reread the story. As he read, dissatisfaction spread from his eyes to all his face. He put the paper aside again, got out of bed, slowly, wearily, wrapped his lean white-pajamaed body in a small-figured brown and black kimono, thrust his feet into brown slippers, and, coughing a little, went into his living-room.

It was a large room in the old manner, high of ceiling and wide of window, with a tremendous mirror over the fireplace and much red plush on the furnishings. He took a cigar from a box on the table and sat in a wide red chair. His feet rested in a parallelogram of late morning sun and the smoke he blew out became suddenly full-bodied as it drifted into the sunlight. He frowned now and chewed a finger-nail when the cigar was not in his mouth.

Knocking sounded on his door. He sat up straight, keen of eye and alert. "Come in."

A white-jacketed waiter came in.

Ned Beaumont said, "Oh, all right," in a disappointed tone and relaxed again against the red plush of his chair.

The waiter passed through to the bedroom, came out with a tray of dishes, and went away. Ned Beaumont threw what was left of his cigar into the fireplace and went into his bathroom. By the time he had shaved, bathed, and dressed, his face had lost its sallowness, his carriage most of its weariness.

## 6

It was not quite noon when Ned Beaumont left his rooms and walked eight blocks to a pale grey apartment-building in Link Street. He pressed a button in the vestibule, entered the

building when the door-lock clicked, and rode to the sixth floor in a small automatic elevator.

He pressed the bell-button set in the frame of a door marked 611. The door was opened immediately by a diminutive girl who could have been only a few months out of her teens. Her eyes were dark and angry, her face white, except around her eyes, and angry. She said, "Oh, hello," and with a smile and a vaguely placatory motion of one hand apologized for her anger. Her voice had a metallic thinness. She wore a brown fur coat, but not a hat. Her short-cut hair—it was nearly black—lay smooth and shiny as enamel on her round head. The gold-set stones pendant from her ear-lobes were carnelian. She stepped back pulling the door back with her.

Ned Beaumont advanced through the doorway asking: "Bernie up yet?"

Anger burned in her face again. She said in a shrill voice: "The crummy bastard!"

Ned Beaumont shut the door behind him without turning around. The girl came close to him, grasped his arms above the elbows, and tried to shake him. "You know what I did for that bum?" she demanded. "I left the best home any girl ever had and a mother and father that thought I was the original Miss Jesus. They told me he was no good. Everybody told me that and they were right and I was too dumb to know it. Well, I hope to tell you I know it now, the..." The rest was shrill obscenity.

Ned Beaumont, motionless, listened gravely. His eyes were not a well man's now. He asked, when breathlessness had stopped her words for the moment: "What's he done?"

"Done? He's taken a run-out on me, the..." The rest of that sentence was obscenity.

Ned Beaumont flinched. The smile into which he pushed his lips was watery. He asked: "I don't suppose he left anything for me?"

The girl clicked her teeth together and pushed her face nearer his. Her eyes widened. "Does he owe you anything?"

"I won—" He coughed. "I'm supposed to have won thirty-

two hundred and fifty bucks on the fourth race yesterday."

She took her hands from his arms and laughed scornfully. "Try and get it. Look." She held out her hands. A carnelian ring was on the little finger of her left hand. She raised her hands and touched her carnelian ear-rings. "That's every stinking piece of my jewelry he left me and he wouldn't 've left me that if I hadn't had them on."

Ned Beaumont asked, in a queer detached voice: "When does this happen?"

"Last night, though I didn't find it out till this morning, but don't think I'm not going to make Mr. Son-of-a-bitch wish to God he'd never seen me." She put a hand inside her dress and brought it out a fist. She held the fist up close to Ned Beaumont's face and opened it. Three small crumpled pieces of paper lay in her hand. When he reached for them she closed her fingers over them again, stepping back and snatching her hand away.

He moved the corners of his mouth impatiently and let his hand fall down at his side.

She said excitedly: "Did you see the paper this morning about Taylor Henry?"

Ned Beaumont's reply, "Yes," was calm enough, but his chest moved out and in with a quick breath.

"Do you know what these are?" She held the three crumpled bits of paper out in her open hand once more.

Ned Beaumont shook his head. His eyes were narrow, shiny.

"They're Taylor Henry's I O Us," she said triumphantly, "twelve hundred dollars' worth of them."

Ned Beaumont started to say something, checked himself, and when he spoke his voice was lifeless. "They're not worth a nickel now he's dead."

She thrust them inside her dress again and came close to Ned Beaumont. "Listen," she said: "they never were worth a nickel and that's why he's dead."

"Is that a guess?"

"It's any damned thing you want to call it," she told him. "But let me tell you something: Bernie called Taylor up last

Friday and told him he'd give him just three days to come across."

Ned Beaumont brushed a side of his mustache with a thumb-nail. "You're not just being mad, are you?" he asked cautiously.

She made an angry face. "Of course I'm mad," she said. "I'm just mad enough to take them to the police and that's what I'm going to do. But if you think it didn't happen you're just a plain damned fool."

He seemed still unconvinced. "Where'd you get them?"

"Out of the safe." She gestured with her sleek head towards the interior of the apartment.

He asked: "What time last night did he blow?"

"I don't know. I got home at half past nine and sat around most of the night expecting him. It wasn't till morning that I began to suspect something and looked around and saw he'd cleaned house of every nickel in money and every piece of my jewelry that I wasn't wearing."

He brushed his mustache with his thumb-nail again and asked: "Where do you think he'd go?"

She stamped her foot and, shaking both fists up and down, began to curse the missing Bernie again in a shrill enraged voice.

Ned Beaumont said: "Stop it." He caught her wrists and held them still. He said: "If you're not going to do anything about it but yell, give me those markers and I'll do something about it."

She tore her wrists out of his hands, crying: "I'll give you nothing. I'll give them to the police and not to another damned soul."

"All right, then do it. Where do you think he'd go, Lee?"

Lee said bitterly that she didn't know where he would go, but she knew where she would like to have him go.

Ned Beaumont said wearily: "That's the stuff. Wisecracking is going to do us a lot of good. Think he'd go back to New York?"

"How do I know?" Her eyes had suddenly become wary.

Annoyance brought spots of color into Ned Beaumont's cheeks. "What are you up to now?" he asked suspiciously.

Her face was an innocent mask. "Nothing. What do you mean?"

He leaned down towards her. He spoke with considerable earnestness, shaking his head slowly from side to side with his words. "Don't think you're not going to the police with them, Lee, because you are."

She said: "Of course I am."

7

In the drug-store that occupied part of the ground-floor of the apartment-building Ned Beaumont used a telephone. He called the Police Department's number, asked for Lieutenant Doolan, and said: "Hello. Lieutenant Doolan? . . . I'm speaking for Miss Lee Wilshire. She's in Bernie Despain's apartment at 1666 Link Street. He seems to have suddenly disappeared last night, leaving some of Taylor Henry's I O Us behind him. . . . That's right, and she says she heard him threaten him a couple of days ago. . . . Yes, and she wants to see you as soon as possible. . . . No, you'd better come up or send and as soon as you can. . . . Yes. . . . That doesn't make any difference. You don't know me. I'm just speaking for her because she didn't want to phone from his apartment. . . ." He listened a moment longer, then, without having said anything else, put the receiver on its prong and went out of the drug-store.

8

Ned Beaumont went to a neat red brick house in a row of neat red brick houses in upper Thames Street. The door was opened to his ring by a young Negress who smiled with her whole brown face, said, "How do you do, Mr. Beaumont?" and made the opening of the door a hearty invitation.

Ned Beaumont said: "Lo, June. Anybody home?"

"Yes, sir, they still at the dinner-table."

He walked back to the dining-room where Paul Madvig and his mother sat facing one another across a red-and-white-clothed table. There was a third chair at the table, but it was not occu-

pied and the plate and silver in front of it had not been used.

Paul Madvig's mother was a tall gaunt woman whose blondness had been faded not quite white by her seventy-some years. Her eyes were as blue and clear and young as her son's—younger than her son's when she looked up at Ned Beaumont entering the room. She deepened the lines in her forehead, however, and said: "So here you are at last. You're a worthless boy to neglect an old woman like this."

Ned Beaumont grinned impudently at her and said: "Aw, Mom, I'm a big boy now and I've got my work to look after." He flirted a hand at Madvig. "Lo, Paul."

Madvig said: "Sit down and June'll scrape you up something to eat."

Ned Beaumont was bending to kiss the scrawny hand Mrs. Madvig had held out to him. She jerked it away and scolded him: "Wherever do you learn such tricks?"

"I told you I was getting to be a big boy now." He addressed Madvig: "Thanks, I'm only a few minutes past breakfast." He looked at the vacant chair. "Where's Opal?"

Mrs. Madvig replied: "She's laying down. She's not feeling good."

Ned Beaumont nodded, waited a moment, and asked politely: "Nothing serious?" He was looking at Madvig.

Madvig shook his head. "Headache or something. I think the kid dances too much."

Mrs. Madvig said: "You certainly are a fine father not to know when your daughter has headaches."

Skin crinkled around Madvig's eyes. "Now, Mom, don't be indecent," he said and turned to Ned Beaumont. "What's the good word?"

Ned Beaumont went around Mrs. Madvig to the vacant chair. He sat down and said: "Bernie Despain blew town last night with my winnings on Peggy O'Toole."

The blond man opened his eyes.

Ned Beaumont said: "He left behind him twelve hundred dollars' worth of Taylor Henry's I O Us."

The blond man's eyes jerked narrow.



Ned Beaumont said: "Lee says he called Taylor Friday and gave him three days to make good."

Madvig touched his chin with the back of a hand. "Who's Lee?"

"Bernie's girl."

"Oh." Then, when Ned Beaumont said nothing, Madvig asked: "What'd he say he was going to do about it if Taylor didn't come across?"

"I didn't hear." Ned Beaumont put a forearm on the table and leaned over it towards the blond man. "Have me made a deputy sheriff or something, Paul."

"For Christ's sake!" Madvig exclaimed, blinking. "What do you want anything like that for?"

"It'll make it easier for me. I'm going after this guy and having a buzzer may keep me from getting in a jam."

Madvig looked through worried eyes at the younger man. "What's got you all steamed up?" he asked slowly.

"Thirty-two hundred and fifty dollars."

"That's all right," Madvig said, still speaking slowly, "but something was itching you last night before you knew you'd been welshed on."

Ned Beaumont moved an impatient arm. "Do you expect me to stumble over corpses without batting an eye?" he asked. "But forget that. That doesn't count now. This does. I've got to get this guy. I've got to." His face was pale, set hard, and his voice was desperately earnest. "Listen, Paul: it's not only the money, though thirty-two hundred is a lot, but it would be the same if it was five bucks. I go two months without winning a bet and that gets me down. What good am I if my luck's gone? Then I cop, or think I do, and I'm all right again. I can take my tail out from between my legs and feel that I'm a person again and not just something that's being kicked around. The money's important enough, but it's not the real thing. It's what losing and losing and losing does to me. Can you get that? It's getting me licked. And then, when I think I've worn out the jinx, this guy takes a Mickey Finn on me. I can't stand for it. If I stand for it I'm licked, my nerve's gone. I'm not going to stand for

it. I'm going after him. I'm going regardless, but you can smooth the way a lot by fixing me up."

Madvig put out a big open hand and roughly pushed Ned Beaumont's drawn face. "Oh, hell, Ned!" he said. "Sure I'll fix you up. The only thing is I don't like you getting mixed up in things, but--hell!--if it's like that--I guess the best shot would be to make you a special investigator in the District Attorney's office. That way you'll be under Farr and he won't be poking his nose in."

Mrs. Madvig stood up with a plate in each bony hand. "If I didn't make a rule of not ever meddling in men's affairs," she said severely, "I certainly would have something to say to the pair of you, running around with the good Lord only knows what kind of monkey-business afoot that's likely as not to get you into the Lord only knows what kind of trouble."

Ned Beaumont grinned until she had left the room with the plates. Then he stopped grinning and said: "Will you fix it up now so everything'll be ready this afternoon?"

"Sure," Madvig agreed, rising. "I'll phone Farr. And if there's anything else I can do, you know."

Ned Beaumont said, "Sure," and Madvig went out.

Brown June came in and began to clear the table.

"Is Miss Opal sleeping now, do you think?" Ned Beaumont asked.

"No, sir. I just now took her up some tea and toast."

"Run up and ask her if I can pop in for a minute?"

"Yes, sir, I sure will."

After the Negress had gone out, Ned Beaumont got up from the table and began to walk up and down the room. Spots of color made his lean cheeks warm just beneath his cheek-bones. He stopped walking when Madvig came in.

"Oke," Madvig said. "If Farr's not in see Barbero. He'll fix you up and you don't have to tell him anything."

Ned Beaumont said, "Thanks," and looked at the brown girl in the doorway.

She said: "She says to come right up."

Opal Madvig's room was chiefly blue. She, in a blue and silver wrapper, was propped up on pillows in her bed when Ned Beaumont came in. She was blue-eyed as her father and grandmother, long-boned as they and firm-featured, with fair pink skin still childish in texture. Her eyes were reddened now.

She dropped a piece of toast on the tray in her lap, held her hand out to Ned Beaumont, showed him strong white teeth in a smile, and said: "Hello, Ned." Her voice was not steady.

He did not take her hand. He slapped the back of it lightly, said, "Lo, snip," and sat on the foot of her bed. He crossed his long legs and took a cigar from his pocket. "Smoke hurt the head?"

"Oh, no," she said.

He nodded as if to himself, returned the cigar to his pocket, and dropped his careless air. He twisted himself around on the bed to look more directly at her. His eyes were humid with sympathy. His voice was husky. "I know, youngster, it's tough."

She stared baby-eyed at him. "No, really, most of the headache's gone and it wasn't so awfully wretched anyway." Her voice was no longer unsteady.

He smiled at her with thinned lips and asked: "So I'm an outsider now?"

She put a small frown between her brows. "I don't know what you mean, Ned."

Hard of mouth and eye, he replied: "I mean Taylor."

Though the tray moved a little on her knees, nothing in her face changed. She said: "Yes, but—you know—I hadn't seen him for months, since Dad made—"

Ned Beaumont stood up abruptly. He said, "All right," over his shoulder as he moved towards the door.

The girl in the bed did not say anything.

He went out of the room and down the stairs.

Paul Madvig, putting on his coat in the lower hall, said: "I've got to go down to the office to see about those sewer-contracts. I'll drop you at Farr's office if you want."

Ned Beaumont had said, "Fine," when Opal's voice came to them from upstairs: "Ned, oh, Ned!"

"Righto," he called back and then to Madvig: "Don't wait if you're in a hurry."

Madvig looked at his watch. "I ought to run along. See you at the Club tonight?"

Ned Beaumont said, "Uh-huh," and went upstairs again.

Opal had pushed the tray down to the foot of the bed. She said: "Close the door." When he had shut the door she moved over in bed to make a place for him to sit beside her. Then she asked: "What makes you act like that?"

"You oughtn't to lie to me," he said gravely as he sat down.

"But, Ned!" Her blue eyes tried to probe his brown ones.

He asked: "How long since you saw Taylor?"

"You mean to talk to?" Her face and voice were candid. "It's been weeks and—"

He stood up abruptly. He said, "All right," over his shoulder while walking towards the door.

She let him get within a step of the door before she called: "Oh, Ned, don't make it so hard for me."

He turned around slowly, his face blank.

"Aren't we friends?" she asked.

"Sure," he replied readily without eagerness, "but it's hard to remember it when we're lying to each other."

She turned sidewise in bed, laying her cheek against the top-most pillow, and began to cry. She made no sound. Her tears fell down on the pillow and made a greyish spot there.

He returned to the bed, sat down beside her again, and moved her head from the pillow to his shoulder.

She cried there silently for several minutes. Then muffled words came from where her mouth was pressed against his coat: "Did—did you know I had been meeting him?"

"Yes."

She sat up straight, alarmed. "Did Dad know it?"

"I don't think so. I don't know."

She lowered her head to his shoulder so that her next words

were muffled. "Oh, Ned, I was with him only yesterday afternoon, all afternoon!"

He tightened his arm around her, but did not say anything.

After another pause she asked: "Who—who do you think could have done it to him?"

He winced.

She raised her head suddenly. There was no weakness in her now. "Do you know, Ned?"

He hesitated, wet his lips, mumbled: "I think I do."

"Who?" she asked fiercely.

He hesitated again, evading her eyes, then put a slow question to her: "Will you promise to keep it to yourself till the time comes?"

"Yes," she replied quickly, but when he would have spoken she stopped him by grabbing his nearer shoulder with both hands. "Wait. I won't promise unless you'll promise me that they won't get off, that they'll be caught and punished."

"I can't promise that. Nobody can."

She stared at him, biting her lip, then said: "All right, then, I'll promise anyway. Who?"

"Did he ever tell you that he owed a gambler named Bernie Despain more money than he could pay?"

"Did—did this Despain—?"

"I think so, but did he ever say anything to you about owing—?"

"I knew he was in trouble. He told me that, but he didn't say what it was except that he and his father had had a row about some money and that he was—'desperate' is what he said."

"Didn't mention Despain?"

"No. What was it? Why do you think this Despain did it?"

"He had over a thousand dollars' worth of Taylor's I O U's and couldn't collect. He left town last night in a hurry. The police are looking for him now." He lowered his voice, looking a little sidewise at her. "Would you do something to help them catch and convict him?"

"Yes. What?"

"I mean something a bit off-color. You see, it's going to be

hard to convict him, but, if he's guilty, would you do something that might be a little bit—well—off-color to make sure of nailing him?"

"Anything," she replied.

He sighed and rubbed his lips together.

"What is it you want done?" she asked eagerly.

"I want you to get me one of his hats."

"What?"

"I want one of Taylor's hats," Ned Beaumont said. His face had flushed. "Can you get me one?"

She was bewildered. "But what for, Ned?"

"To make sure of nailing Despain. That's all I can tell you now. Can you get it for me or can't you?"

"I—I think I can, but I wish you'd—"

"How soon?"

"This afternoon, I think," she said, "but I wish—"

He interrupted her again. "You don't want to know anything about it. The fewer know about it the better, and the same thing goes for your getting the hat." He put his arm around her and drew her to him. "Did you really love him, snip, or was it just because your father—"

"I did really love him," she sobbed. "I'm pretty sure—I'm sure I did."

## II. THE HAT TRICK

### I

Ned Beaumont, wearing a hat that did not quite fit him, followed the porter carrying his bags through Grand Central Terminal to a Forty-second Street exit, and thence to a maroon taxicab. He tipped the porter, climbed into the taxicab, gave its driver the name of a hotel off Broadway in the Forties, and settled back lighting a cigar. He chewed the cigar more than he smoked it as the taxicab crawled through theater-bound traffic towards Broadway.

At Madison Avenue a green taxicab, turning against the light,

ran full tilt into Ned Beaumont's maroon one, driving it over against a car that was parked by the curb, hurling him into a corner in a shower of broken glass.

He pulled himself upright and climbed out into the gathering crowd. He was not hurt, he said. He answered a policeman's questions. He found the hat that did not quite fit him and put it on his head. He had his bags transferred to another taxicab, gave the hotel's name to the second driver, and huddled back in a corner, white-faced and shivering, while the ride lasted.

When he had registered at the hotel he asked for his mail and was given two telephone-memorandum-slips and two sealed envelopes without postage stamps.

He asked the bellboy who took him to his room to get him a pint of rye whisky. When the boy had gone he turned the key in the door and read the telephone-memoranda. Both slips were dated that day, one marked 4:50 P.M., the other 8:05 P.M. He looked at his wrist-watch. It was 8:45 P.M.

The earlier slip read: *At the Gargoyle.* The later read: *At Tom & Jerry's. Will phone later.* Both were signed: *Jack.*

He opened one of the envelopes. It contained two sheets of paper covered by bold masculine handwriting, dated the previous day.

*She is staying at the Matin, room 1211, registered as Eileen Dale, Chicago. She did some phoning from the depot and connected with a man and girl who live E. 30th. They went to a lot of places, mostly speakies, probably hunting him, but don't seem to have much luck. My room is 734. Man and girl named Brook.*

The sheet of paper in the other envelope, covered by the same handwriting, was dated that day.

*I saw Deward this morning, but he says he did not know Bernie was in town. Will phone later.*

Both of these messages were signed: *Jack.*

Ned Beaumont washed, put on fresh linen from his bags, and was lighting a cigar when the bellboy brought him his pint of whisky. He paid the boy, got a tumbler from the bathroom, and drew a chair up to the bedroom-window. He sat there

smoking, drinking, and staring down at the other side of the street until his telephone-bell rang.

"Hello," he said into the telephone. "Yes, Jack. . . . Just now. . . . Where? . . . Sure. . . . Sure, on my way."

He took another drink of whisky, put on the hat that did not quite fit him, picked up the overcoat he had dropped across a chair-back, put it on, patted one of its pockets, switched off the lights, and went out.

It was then ten minutes past nine o'clock.

## 2

Through double swinging glazed doors under an electric sign that said *Tom & Jerry's* down the front of a building within sight of Broadway, Ned Beaumont passed into a narrow corridor. A single swinging door in the corridor's left wall let him into a small restaurant.

A man at a corner-table stood up and raised a forefinger at him. The man was of medium height, young and dapper, with a sleek dark rather good-looking face.

Ned Beaumont went over to him. "Lo, Jack," he said as they shook hands.

"They're upstairs, the girl and those Brook people," Jack told him. "You ought to be all right sitting here with your back to the stairs. I can spot them if they go out, or him coming in, and there's enough people in the way to keep him from making you."

Ned Beaumont sat down at Jack's table. "They waiting for him?"

Jack moved his shoulders. "I don't know, but they're doing some stalling about something. Want something to eat? You can't get anything to drink downstairs here."

Ned Beaumont said: "I want a drink. Can't we find a place upstairs where they won't see us?"

"It's not a very big joint," Jack protested. "There's a couple of booths up there where we might be hidden from them, but if he comes in he's likely to spot us."

"Let's risk it. I want a drink and I might as well talk to him right here if he does show up."



Jack looked curiously at Ned Beaumont, then turned his eyes away and said: "You're the boss. I'll see if one of the booths is empty." He hesitated, moved his shoulders again, and left the table.

Ned Beaumont twisted himself around in his chair to watch the dapper young man go back to the stairs and mount them. He watched the foot of the stairs until the young man came down again. From the second step Jack beckoned. He said, when Ned Beaumont had joined him there: "The best of them's empty and her back's this way, so you can get a slant at the Brooks as you go over."

They went upstairs. The booths—tables and benches set within breast-high wooden stalls—were to the right of the stair-head. They had to turn and look through a wide arch and down past the bar to see into the second-floor dining-room.

Ned Beaumont's eyes focused on the back of Lee Wilshire in sleeveless fawn gown and brown hat. Her brown fur coat was hanging over the back of her chair. He looked at her companions. At her left was a hawk-nosed long-chinned pale man, a predatory animal of forty or so. Facing her sat a softly fleshed red-haired girl with eyes set far apart. She was laughing.

Ned Beaumont followed Jack to their stall. They sat down with the table between them. Ned Beaumont sat with his back to the dining-room, close to the end of his bench to take full advantage of the wooden wing's shelter. He took off his hat, but not his overcoat.

A waiter came. Ned Beaumont said: "Rye." Jack said: "Rickey."

Jack opened a package of cigarettes, took one out, and, staring at it, said: "It's your game and I'm working for you, but this isn't a hell of a good spot to go up against him if he's got friends here."

"Has he?"

Jack put the cigarette in a corner of his mouth so it moved batonwise with his words. "If they're waiting here for him, it might be one of his hang-outs."

The waiter came with their drinks. Ned Beaumont drained his glass immediately and complained: "Cut to nothing."

"Yes, I guess it is," Jack said and took a sip from his glass. He set fire to the end of his cigarette and took another sip.

"Well," Ned Beaumont said, "I'm going up against him as soon as he shows."

"Fair enough." Jack's good-looking dark face was inscrutable. "What do I do?"

Ned Beaumont said, "Leave it to me," and caught their waiter's attention.

He ordered a double Scotch. Jack another rickey. Ned Beaumont emptied his glass as soon as it arrived. Jack let his first drink be carried away no more than half consumed and sipped at his second. Presently Ned Beaumont had another double Scotch and another while Jack had time to finish none of his drinks.

Then Bernie Despain came upstairs.

Jack, watching the head of the stairs, saw the gambler and put a foot on Ned Beaumont's under the table. Ned Beaumont, looking up from his empty glass, became suddenly hard and cold of eye. He put his hands flat on the table and stood up. He stepped out of the stall and faced Despain. He said: "I want my money, Bernie."

The man who had come upstairs behind Despain now walked around him and struck Ned Beaumont very hard in the body with his left fist. He was not a tall man, but his shoulders were heavy and his fists were large globes.

Ned Beaumont was knocked back against a stall-partition. He bent forward and his knees gave, but he did not fall. He hung there for a moment. His eyes were glassy and his skin had taken on a greenish tinge. He said something nobody could have understood and went to the head of the stairs. He went down the stairs, loose-jointed, pallid, and bareheaded. He went through the downstairs dining-room to the street and out to the curb, where he vomited. When he had vomited, he went to a taxicab that stood a dozen feet away, climbed into it, and gave the driver an address in Greenwich Village.

Ned Beaumont left the taxicab in front of a house whose open basement-door, under brown stone steps, let noise and light out into a dark street. He went through the basement-doorway into a narrow room where two white-coated bar-tenders served a dozen men and women at a twenty-foot bar and two waiters moved among tables at which other people sat.

The balder bar-tender said, "For Christ's sake, Ned!" put down the pink mixture he was shaking in a tall glass, and stuck a wet hand out across the bar.

Ned Beaumont said, "'Lo, Mack," and shook the wet hand.

One of the waiters came up to shake Ned Beaumont's hand and then a round and florid Italian whom Ned Beaumont called Tony. When these greetings were over Ned Beaumont said he would buy a drink.

"Like hell you will," Tony said. He turned to the bar and rapped on it with an empty cocktail-glass. "This guy can't buy so much as a glass of water tonight," he said when he had the bar-tenders' attention. "What he wants is on the house."

Ned Beaumont said: "That's all right for me, so I get it. Double Scotch."

Two girls at a table in the other end of the room stood up and called together: "Yoo-hoo, Ned!"

He told Tony, "Be back in a minute," and went to the girls' table. They embraced him, asked him questions, introduced him to the men with them, and made a place for him at their table.

He sat down and replied to their questions that he was back in New York only for a short visit and not to stay and that his was double Scotch.

At a little before three o'clock they rose from their table, left Tony's establishment, and went to another almost exactly like it three blocks away, where they sat at a table that could hardly have been told from the first and drank the same sort of liquor they had been drinking.

One of the men went away at half past three. He did not

say good-by to the others, nor they to him. Ten minutes later Ned Beaumont, the other man, and the two girls left. They got into a taxicab at the corner and went to a hotel near Washington Square, where the other man and one of the girls got out.

The remaining girl took Ned Beaumont, who called her Fedink, to an apartment in Seventy-third Street. The apartment was very warm. When she opened the door warm air came out to meet them. When she was three steps inside the living-room she sighed and fell down on the floor.

Ned Beaumont shut the door and tried to awaken her, but she would not wake. He carried and dragged her difficultly into the next room and put her on a chintz-covered day-bed. He took off part of her clothing, found some blankets to spread over her, and opened a window. Then he went into the bathroom and was sick. After that he returned to the living-room, lay down on the sofa in all his clothes, and went to sleep.

4

A telephone-bell, ringing close to Ned Beaumont's head, awakened him. He opened his eyes, put his feet down on the floor, turned on his side, and looked around the room. When he saw the telephone he shut his eyes and relaxed.

The bell continued to ring. He groaned, opened his eyes again, and squirmed until he had freed his left arm from beneath his body. He put his wrist close to his eyes and looked at his watch, squinting. The watch's crystal was gone and its hands had stopped at twelve minutes to twelve.

Ned Beaumont squirmed again on the sofa until he was leaning on his left elbow, holding his head up on his left hand. The telephone-bell was still ringing. He looked around the room with miserably dull eyes. The lights were burning. Through an open doorway he could see Fedink's blanket-covered feet on an end of the day-bed.

He groaned again and sat up, running fingers through his tousled dark hair, squeezing his temples between the heels of

his palms. His lips were dry and brownly encrusted. He ran his tongue over them and made a distasteful face. Then he rose, coughing a little, took off his gloves and overcoat, dropped them on the sofa, and went into the bathroom.

When he came out he went to the day-bed and looked down at Fedink. She was sleeping heavily, face down, one blue-sleeved arm crooked above her head. The telephone-bell had stopped ringing. He pulled his tie straight and returned to the living-room.

Three Murad cigarettes were in an open box on the table between two chairs. He picked up one of the cigarettes, muttered, "Nonchalant," without humor, found a paper of matches, lit the cigarette, and went into the kitchen. He squeezed the juice of four oranges into a tall glass and drank it. He made and drank two cups of coffee.

As he came out of the kitchen Fedink asked in a woefully flat voice: "Where's Ted?" Her one visible eye was partially open.

Ned Beaumont went over to her. "Who's Ted?" he asked. "That fellow I was with."

"Were you with somebody? How do I know?"

She opened her mouth and made an unpleasant clucking sound shutting it. "What time is it?"

"I don't know that either. Somewhere around daylight."

She rubbed her face into the chintz cushion under it and said: "A swell guy I turned out to be, promising to marry him yesterday and then leaving him to take the first tramp I run into home with me." She opened and shut the hand that was above her head. "Or am I home?"

"You had a key to the place, anyway," Ned Beaumont told her. "Want some orange-juice and coffee?"

"I don't want a damned thing except to die. Will you go away, Ned, and not ever come back?"

"It's going to be hard on me," he said ill-naturedly, "but I'll try."

He put on his overcoat and gloves, took a dark wrinkled cap from one overcoat-pocket, put the cap on, and left the house.

Half an hour later Ned Beaumont was knocking on the door of room 734 at his hotel. Presently Jack's voice, drowsy, came through the door: "Who's that?"

"Beaumont."

"Oh," without enthusiasm, "all right."

Jack opened the door and turned on the lights. He was in green-spotted pajamas. His feet were bare. His eyes were dull, his face flushed, with sleepiness. He yawned, nodded, and went back to bed, where he stretched himself out on his back and stared at the ceiling. Then he asked, with not much interest: "How are you this morning?"

Ned Beaumont had shut the door. He stood between door and bed looking sullenly at the man in the bed. He asked: "What happened after I left?"

"Nothing happened." Jack yawned again. "Or do you mean what did I do?" He did not wait for a reply. "I went out and took a plant across the street till they came out. Despain and the girl and the guy that slugged you came out. They went to the Buckman, Forty-eight Street. That's where Despain's holing up—apartment 938—name of Barton Dewey. I hung around there till after three and then knocked off. They were all still in there unless they were fooling me." He jerked his head slightly in the direction of a corner of the room. "Your hat's on the chair there. I thought I might as well save it for you."

Ned Beaumont went over to the chair and picked up the hat that did not quite fit him. He stuffed the wrinkled dark cap in his overcoat-pocket and put the hat on his head.

Jack said: "There's some gin on the table if you want a shot."

Ned Beaumont said: "No, thanks. Have you got a gun?"

Jack stopped staring at the ceiling. He sat up in bed, stretched his arms out wide, yawned for the third time, and asked: "What are you figuring on doing?" His voice held nothing beyond polite curiosity.

"I'm going to see Despain."

Jack had drawn his knees up, had clasped his hands around them, and was sitting hunched forward a little staring at the foot of the bed. He said slowly: "I don't think you ought to, not right now."

"I've got to, right now," Ned Beaumont said.

His voice made Jack look at him. Ned Beaumont's face was an unhealthy yellowish grey. His eyes were muddy, red-rimmed, not sufficiently open to show any of the whites. His lips were dry and somewhat thicker than usual.

"Been up all night?" Jack asked.

"I got some sleep."

"Unkdray?"

"Yes, but how about the gun?"

Jack swung his legs out from beneath the covers and down over the side of the bed. "Why don't you get some sleep first? Then we can go after them. You're in no shape now."

Ned Beaumont said: "I'm going now."

Jack said: "All right, but you're wrong. You know they're no babies to go up against shaky. They mean it."

"Where's the gun?" Ned Beaumont asked.

Jack stood up and began to unbutton his pajama-coat.

Ned Beaumont said: "Give me the gun and get back in bed. I'm going."

Jack fastened the button he had just unfastened and got into bed. "The gun's in the top bureau-drawer," he said. "There are extra cartridges in there too if you want them." He turned over on his side and shut his eyes.

Ned Beaumont found the pistol, put it in a hip-pocket, said, "See you later," switched off the lights, and went out.

6

The Buckman was a square-built yellow apartment-building that filled most of the block it stood in. Inside, Ned Beaumont said he wanted to see Mr. Dewey. When asked for his name he said: "Ned Beaumont."

Five minutes later he was walking away from an elevator down a long corridor towards an open door where Bernie Despain stood.

Despain was a small man, short and stringy, with a head too large for his body. The size of his head was exaggerated until it seemed a deformity by long thick fluffy waved hair. His face was swarthy, large-featured except for the eyes, and strongly lined across the forehead and down from nostrils past the mouth. He had a faintly reddish scar on one cheek. His blue suit was carefully pressed and he wore no jewelry.

He stood in the doorway, smiling sardonically, and said: "Good morning, Ned."

Ned Beaumont said: "I want to talk to you, Bernie."

"I guessed you did. As soon as they phoned your name up I said to myself: 'I bet you he wants to talk to me.'"

Ned Beaumont said nothing. His yellow face was tight-lipped.

Despain's smile became looser. He said: "Well, my boy, you don't have to stand here. Come on in." He stepped aside.

The door opened into a small vestibule. Through an opposite door that stood open Lee Wilshire and the man who had struck Ned Beaumont could be seen. They had stopped packing two traveling-bags to look at Ned Beaumont.

He went into the vestibule.

Despain followed him in, shut the corridor-door, and said: "The Kid's kind of hasty and when you come up to me like that he thought maybe you were looking for trouble, see? I give him hell about it and maybe if you ask him he'll apologize."

The Kid said something in an undertone to Lee Wilshire, who was glaring at Ned Beaumont. She laughed a vicious little laugh and replied: "Yes, a sportsman to the last."

Bernie Despain said: "Go right in, Mr. Beaumont. You've already met the folks, haven't you?"

Ned Beaumont advanced into the room where Lee and Kid were.

The Kid asked: "How's the belly?"

Ned Beaumont did not say anything.

Bernie Despain exclaimed: "Jesus! For a guy that says he came up here to talk you've done less of it than anybody I ever heard of."

"I want to talk to you," Ned Beaumont said. "Do we have to have all these people around?"



"I do," Despain replied. "You don't. You can get away from them just by walking out and going about your own business."

"I've got business here."

"That's right, there was something about money." Despain grinned at the Kid. "Wasn't there something about money, Kid?"

The Kid had moved to stand in the doorway through which Ned Beaumont had come into the room. "Something," he said in a rasping voice, "but I forget what."

Ned Beaumont took off his overcoat and hung it on the back of a brown easy-chair. He sat down in the chair and put his hat behind him. He said: "That's not my business this time. I'm—let's see." He took a paper from his inner coat-pocket, unfolded it, glanced at it, and said: "I'm here as special investigator for the District Attorney's office."

For a small fraction of a second the twinkle in Despain's eyes was blurred, but he said immediately: "Ain't you getting up in the world! The last time I saw you you were just punking around for Paul."

Ned Beaumont refolded the paper and returned it to his pocket.

Despain said: "Well, go ahead, investigate something for us—anything—just to show us how it's done." He sat down facing Ned Beaumont, wagging his too-large head. "You ain't going to tell me you came all the way to New York to ask me about killing Taylor Henry?"

"Yes."

"That's too bad. I could've saved you the trip." He flourished a hand at the traveling-bags on the floor. "As soon as Lee told me what it was all about I started packing up to go back and laugh at your frame-up."

Ned Beaumont lounged back comfortably in his chair. One of his hands was behind him. He said: "If it's a frame-up it's Lee's. The police got their dope from her."

"Yes," she said angrily, "when I had to because you sent them there, you bastard."

Despain said: "Uh-huh, Lee's a dumb cluck, all right, but

those markers don't mean anything. They--"

"I'm a dumb cluck, am I?" Lee cried indignantly. "Didn't I come all the way here to warn you after you'd run off with every stinking piece of--"

"Yes." Despain agreed pleasantly, "and coming here shows just what a dumb cluck you are, because you led this guy right to me."

"If that's the way you feel about it I'm damned glad I did give the police those I O Us, and what do you think of that?"

Despain said: "I'll tell you just exactly what I think of it after our company's gone." He turned to Ned Beaumont. "So honest Paul Madvig's letting you drop the shuck on me, huh?"

Ned Beaumont smiled. "You're not being framed, Bernie, and you know it. Lee gave us the lead-in and the rest that we got clicked with it."

"There's some more besides what she gave you?"

"Plenty."

"What?"

Ned Beaumont smiled again. "There are lots of things I could say to you, Bernie, that I wouldn't want to say in front of a crowd."

Despain said: "Nuts!"

The Kid spoke from the doorway to Despain in his rasping voice: "Let's chuck this sap out on his can and get going."

"Wait," Despain said. Then he frowned and put a question to Ned Beaumont: "Is there a warrant out for me?"

"Well, I don't--"

"Yes or no?" Despain's bantering humor was gone.

Ned Beaumont said slowly: "Not that I know of."

Despain stood up and pushed his chair back. "Then get the hell out of here and make it quick, or I'll let the Kid take another poke at you."

Ned Beaumont stood up. He picked up his overcoat. He took his cap out of his overcoat-pocket and, holding it in one hand, overcoat over the other arm, said seriously: "You'll be sorry." Then he walked out in a dignified manner. The Kid's rasping laughter and Lee's shriller hooting followed him out.

Outside the Buckman Ned Beaumont started briskly down the street. His eyes were glowing in his tired face and his dark mustache twitched above a flickering smile.

At the first corner he came face to face with Jack. He asked: "What are you doing here?"

Jack said: "I'm still working for you, far as I know, so I came along to see if I could find anything to do."

"Swell. Find us a taxi quick. They're sliding out."

Jack said, "Ay, ay," and went down the street.

Ned Beaumont remained on the corner. The front and side entrances of the Buckman could be seen from there.

In a little while Jack returned in a taxicab. Ned Beaumont got into it and they told the driver where to park it.

"What did you do to them?" Jack asked when they were sitting still.

"Things."

"Oh."

Ten minutes passed and Jack, saying, "Look," was pointing a forefinger at a taxicab drawing up to the Buckman's side door.

The Kid, carrying two traveling-bags, left the building first, then, when he was in the taxicab, Despain and the girl ran out to join him. The taxicab ran away.

Jack leaned forward and told his driver what to do. They ran along in the other cab's wake. They wound through streets that were bright with morning sunlight, going by a devious route finally to a battered brown stone house in west Forty-ninth Street.

Despain's cab stopped in front of the house and, once more, the Kid was the first of the trio out on the sidewalk. He looked up and down the street. He went up to the front door of the house and unlocked it. Then he returned to the taxicab. Despain and the girl jumped out and went indoors hurriedly. The Kid followed with the bags.

"Stick here with the cab," Ned Beaumont told Jack.

"What are you going to do?"

"Try my luck."

Jack shook his head. "This is another wrong neighborhood to look for trouble in," he said.

Ned Beaumont said: "If I come out with Despain, you beat it. Get another taxi and go back to watch the Buckman. If I don't come out, use your own judgment."

He opened the cab-door and stepped out. He was shivering. His eyes were shiny. He ignored something that Jack leaned out to say and hurried across the street to the house into which the two men and the girl had gone.

He went straight up the front steps and put a hand on the door-knob. The knob turned in his hand. The door was not locked. He pushed it open and, after peering into the dim hallway, went in.

The door slammed shut behind him and one of the Kid's fists struck his head a glancing blow that carried his cap away and sent him crashing into the wall. He sank down a little, giddily, almost to one knee, and the Kid's other fist struck the wall over his head.

He pulled his lips back over his teeth and drove a fist into the Kid's groin, a short sharp blow that brought a snarl from the Kid and made him fall back so that Ned Beaumont could pull himself up straight before the Kid was upon him again.

Up the hallway a little, Bernie Despain was leaning against the wall, his mouth stretched wide and thin, his eyes narrowed to dark points, saying over and over in a low voice: "Sock him, Kid, sock him. . . ." Lee Wilshire was not in sight.

The Kid's next two blows landed on Ned Beaumont's chest, mashing him against the wall, making him cough. The third, aimed at his face, he avoided. Then he pushed the Kid away from him with a forearm against his throat and kicked the Kid in the belly. The Kid roared angrily and came in with both fists going, but forearm and foot had carried him away from Ned Beaumont and had given Ned Beaumont time to get his right hand to his hip-pocket and to get Jack's revolver out of his pocket. He had not time to level the revolver, but, holding it at a downward angle, he pulled the trigger and managed to shoot the Kid in the right thigh. The Kid yelped and fell

down on the hallway floor. He lay there looking up at Ned Beaumont with frightened bloodshot eyes.

Ned Beaumont stepped back from him, put his left hand in his trousers-pocket, and addressed Bernie Despain: "Come on out with me. I want to talk to you." His face was sullenly determined.

Footsteps ran overhead, somewhere back in the building a door opened, and down the hallway excited voices were audible, but nobody came into sight.

Despain stared for a long moment at Ned Beaumont as if horribly fascinated. Then, without a word, he stepped over the man on the floor and went out of the building ahead of Ned Beaumont. Ned Beaumont put the revolver in his jacket-pocket before he went down the street-steps, but he kept his hand on it.

"Up to that taxi," he told Despain, indicating the car out of which Jack was getting. When they reached the taxicab he told the chauffeur to drive them anywhere, "just around till I tell you where to go."

They were in motion when Despain found his voice. He said: "This is a hold-up. I'll give you anything you want because I don't want to be killed, but it's just a hold-up."

Ned Beaumont laughed disagreeably and shook his head. "Don't forget I've risen in the world to be something or other in the District Attorney's office."

"But there's no charge against me. I'm not wanted. You said—"

"I was spoofing you, Bernie, for reasons. You're wanted."

"For what?"

"Killing Taylor Henry."

"That? Hell, I'll go back and face that. What've you got against me? I had some of his markers, sure. And I left the night he was killed, sure. And I gave him hell because he wouldn't make them good, sure. What kind of case is that for a first-class lawyer to beat? Jesus, if I left the markers behind in my safe at some time before nine-thirty—to go by Lee's story—don't that show I wasn't trying to collect that night?"

"No, and that isn't all the stuff we've got on you."

"That's all there could be," Despain said earnestly.

Ned Beaumont sneered. "Wrong, Bernie. Remember I had a hat on when I came to see you this morning?"

"Maybe. I think you did."

"Remember I took a cap out of my overcoat-pocket and put it on when I left?"

Bewilderment, fear, began to come into the swarthy man's small eyes. "By Jesus! Well? What are you getting at?"

"I'm getting at the evidence. Do you remember the hat didn't fit me very well?"

Bernie Despain's voice was hoarse: "I don't know, Ned. For Christ's sake, what do you mean?"

"I mean it didn't fit me because it wasn't my hat. Do you remember that the hat Taylor was wearing when he was murdered wasn't found?"

"I don't know. I don't know anything about him."

"Well, I'm trying to tell you the hat I had this morning was Taylor's hat and it's now planted down between the cushion-seat and the back of that brown easy-chair in the apartment you had at the Buckman. Do you think that, with the rest, would be enough to set you on the hot seat?"

Despain would have screamed in terror if Ned Beaumont had not clapped a hand over his mouth and growled, "Shut up," in his ear.

Sweat ran down the swarthy face. Despain fell over on Ned Beaumont, seizing the lapels of his coat with both hands, babbling: "Listen, don't you do that to me, Ned. You can have every cent I owe you, every cent with interest, if you won't do that. I never meant to rob you, Ned, honest to God. It was just that I was caught short and thought I'd treat it like a loan. Honest to God, Ned. I ain't got much now, but I'm fixed to get the money for Lee's rocks that I'm selling today and I'll give you your dough, every nickel of it, out of that. How much was it, Ned? I'll give you all of it right away, this morning."

Ned Beaumont pushed the swarthy man over to his own side

of the taxicab and said: "It was thirty-two hundred and fifty dollars."

"Thirty-two hundred and fifty dollars. You'll get it, every cent of it, this morning, right away." Despain looked at his watch. "Yes, sir, right this minute as soon as we can get there. Old Stein will be at his place before this. Only say you'll let me go, Ned, for old times' sake."

Ned Beaumont rubbed his hands together thoughtfully. "I can't exactly let you go. Not right now, I mean. I've got to remember the District Attorney connection and that you're wanted for questioning. So all we can dicker about is the hat. Here's the proposition : give me my money and I'll see that I'm alone when I turn up the hat and nobody else will ever know about it. Otherwise I'll see that half the New York police are with me and— There you are. Take it or leave it."

"Oh, God!" Bernie Despain groaned. "Tell him to drive us to old Stein's place. It's on..."

### III. THE CYCLONE SHOT

#### I

Ned Beaumont leaving the train that had brought him back from New York was a clear-eyed erect tall man. Only the flatness of his chest hinted at any constitutional weakness. In color and line his face was hale. His stride was long and elastic. He went nimbly up the concrete stairs that connected train-shed with street-level, crossed the waiting-room, waved a hand at an acquaintance behind the information counter, and passed out of the station through one of the street-doors.

While waiting on the sidewalk for the porter with his bags to come he bought a newspaper. He opened it when he was in a taxicab riding towards Randall Avenue with his luggage. He read a half-column on the front page:

SECOND BROTHER KILLED  
FRANCIS F. WEST MURDERED  
CLOSE TO SPOT WHERE  
BROTHER MET DEATH

For the second time within two weeks tragedy came to the West family of 1342 N. Achland Avenue last night when Francis F. West, 31, was shot to death in the street less than a block from the corner where he had seen his brother Norman run down and killed by an alleged bootleg car last month.

Francis West, who was employed as waiter at the Rockaway Café, was returning from work at a little after midnight, when, according to those who witnessed the tragedy, he was overtaken by a black touring car that came down Achland Avenue at high speed. The car swung in to the curb as it reached West, and more than a score of shots are said to have been fired from it. West fell with eight bullets in his body, dying before anybody could reach him. The death car, which is said not to have stopped, immediately picked up speed again and vanished around the corner of Bowman Street. The police are hampered in their attempt to find the car by conflicting descriptions given by witnesses, none of whom claims to have seen any of the men in the automobile.

Boyd West, the surviving brother, who also witnessed Norman's death last month, could ascribe no reason for Francis's murder. He said he knew of no enemies his brother had made. Miss Marie Shepperd, 1917 Baker Avenue, to whom Francis West was to have been married next week, was likewise unable to name anyone who might have desired her fiancé's death.

Timothy Ivans, alleged driver of the car that accidentally ran down and killed Norman West last month, refused to talk to reporters in his cell at the City Prison, where he is held without bail, awaiting trial for manslaughter.



Ned Beaumont folded the newspaper with careful slowness and put it in one of his overcoat-pockets. His lips were drawn a little together and his eyes were bright with thinking. Otherwise his face was composed. He leaned back in a corner of the taxicab and played with an unlighted cigar.

In his rooms he went, without pausing to remove hat or coat, to the telephone and called four numbers, asking each time whether Paul Madvig was there and whether it was known where he could be found. After the fourth call he gave up trying to find Madvig.

He put the telephone down, picked his cigar up from where he had laid it on the table, lighted the cigar, laid it on the edge of the table again, picked up the telephone, and called the City Hall's number. He asked for the District Attorney's office. While he waited he dragged a chair, by means of a foot hooked under one of its rounds, over to the telephone, sat down, and put the cigar in his mouth.

Then he said into the telephone: "Hello. Is Mr. Farr in? . . . Ned Beaumont. . . Yes, thanks." He inhaled and exhaled smoke slowly. "Hello, Farr? . . . Just got in a couple of minutes ago. . . . Yes. Can I see you now? . . . That's right. Has Paul said anything to you about the West killing? . . . Don't know where he is, do you? . . . Well, there's an angle I'd like to talk to you about. . . Yes, say half an hour. . . Right."

He put the telephone aside and went across the room to look at the mail on a table by the door. There were some magazines and nine letters. He looked rapidly at the envelopes, dropped them on the table again without having opened any, and went into his bedroom to undress, then into his bathroom to shave and bathe.

2

District Attorney Michael Joseph Farr was a stout man of forty. His hair was a florid stubble above a florid pugnacious face. His walnut desk-top was empty except for a telephone and a large desk-set of green onyx whereon a nude metal figure

holding aloft an airplane stood on one foot between two black and white fountain-pens that slanted off to either side at rakish angles.

He shook Ned Beaumont's hand in both of his and pressed him down into a leather-covered chair before returning to his own seat. He rocked back in his chair and asked: "Have a nice trip?" Inquisitiveness gleamed through the friendliness in his eyes.

"It was all right," Ned Beaumont replied. "About this Francis West: with him out of the way how does the case against Tim Ivans stand?"

Farr started, then made that startled motion part of a deliberate squirming into a more comfortable position in his chair.

"Well, it won't make such a lot of difference there," he said, "that is, not a whole lot, since there's still the other brother to testify against Ivans." He very noticeably did not watch Ned Beaumont's face, but looked at a corner of the walnut desk. "Why? What'd you have on your mind?"

Ned Beaumont was looking gravely at the man who was not looking at him. "I was just wondering. I suppose it's all right, though, if the other brother can and will identify Tim."

Farr, still not looking up, said: "Sure." He rocked his chair back and forth gently, an inch or two each way half a dozen times. His fleshy cheeks moved in little ripples where they covered his jaw-muscles. He cleared his throat and stood up. He looked at Ned Beaumont now with friendly eyes. "Wait a minute," he said. "I've got to go see about something. They forget everything if I don't keep right on their tails. Don't go. I want to talk to you about Despain."

Ned Beaumont murmured, "Don't hurry," as the District Attorney left the office, and sat and smoked placidly all the fifteen minutes he was gone.

Farr returned frowning. "Sorry to leave you like that," he said as he sat down, "but we're fairly smothered under work. If it keeps up like this—" He completed the sentence by making a gesture of hopelessness with his hands.

"That's all right. Anything new on the Taylor Henry killing?"

"Nothing here. That's what I wanted to ask you about—Despain." Again Farr was definitely not watching Ned Beaumont's face.

A thin mocking smile that the other man could not see twitched for an instant the corners of Ned Beaumont's mouth. He said: "There's not much of a case against him when you come to look at it closely."

Farr nodded slowly at the corner of his desk. "Maybe, but his blowing town that same night don't look so damned good."

"He had another reason for that," Ned Beaumont said, "a pretty good one." The shadowy smile came and went.

Farr nodded again in the manner of one willing to be convinced. "You don't think there's a chance that he really killed him?"

Ned Beaumont's reply was given carelessly: "I don't think he did it, but there's always a chance and you've got plenty to hold him awhile on if you want to."

The District Attorney raised his head and looked at Ned Beaumont. He smiled with a mixture of diffidence and good-fellowship and said: "Tell me to go to hell if it's none of my business, but why in the name of God did Paul send you to New York after Bernie Despain?"

Ned Beaumont withheld his reply for a thoughtful moment. Then he moved his shoulders a little and said: "He didn't send me. He let me go."

Farr did not say anything.

Ned Beaumont filled his lungs with cigar-smoke, emptied them, and said: "Bernie welshed on a bet with me. That's why he took the run-out. It just happened that Taylor Henry was killed the night of the day Peggy O'Toole came in in front with fifteen hundred of my dollars on her."

The District Attorney said hastily: "That's all right, Ned. It's none of my business what you and Paul do. I'm—you see, it's just that I'm not so damned sure that maybe Despain didn't happen to run into young Henry on the street by luck and take a crack at him. I think maybe I'll hold him awhile to be safe." His blunt undershot mouth curved in a smile that was some-

what ingratiating. "Don't think I'm pushing my snoot into Paul's affairs, or yours, but—" His florid face was turgid and shiny. He suddenly bent over and yanked a desk-drawer open. Paper rattled under his fingers. His hand came out of the drawer and went across the desk towards Ned Beaumont. In his hand was a small white envelope with a slit edge. "Here." His voice was thick. "Look at this and see what you think of it, or is it only damned foolishness?"

Ned Beaumont took the envelope, but did not immediately look at it. He kept his eyes, now cold and bright, focused on the District Attorney's red face.

Farr's face became a darker red under the other man's stare and he raised a beefy hand in a placatory gesture. His voice was placatory: "I don't attach any importance to it, Ned, but—I mean we always get a lot of junk like that on every case that comes up and—well, read it and see."

After another considerable moment Ned Beaumont shifted his gaze from Farr to the envelope. The address was typewritten:

*M. J. Farr, Esq.  
District Attorney  
City Hall  
City*

*Personal*

The postmark was dated the previous Saturday. Inside was a single sheet of white paper on which three sentences with neither salutation nor signature were typewritten:

Why did Paul Madvig steal one of Taylor Henry's hats after he was murdered?

What became of the hat that Taylor Henry was wearing when he was murdered?

Why was the man who claimed to have first found Taylor Henry's body made a member of your staff?

Ned Beaumont folded this communication, returned it to its

envelope, dropped it down on the desk, and brushed his mustache with a thumb-nail from center to left and from center to right, looking at the District Attorney with level eyes, addressing him in a level tone: "Well?"

Farr's cheeks rippled again where they covered his jaw-muscles. He frowned over pleading eyes. "For God's sake, Ned," he said earnestly, "don't think I'm taking that seriously. We get bales of that kind of crap every time anything happens. I only wanted to show it to you."

Ned Beaumont said: "That's all right as long as you keep on feeling that way about it." He was still level of eye and voice. "Have you said anything to Paul about it?"

"About the letter? No. I haven't seen him since it came this morning."

Ned Beaumont picked the envelope up from the desk and put it in his inner coat-pocket. The District Attorney, watching the letter go into the pocket, seemed uncomfortable, but he did not say anything.

Ned Beaumont said, when he had stowed the letter away and had brought a thin dappled cigar out of another pocket: "I don't think I'd say anything to him about it if I were you. He's got enough on his mind."

Farr was saying, "Sure, whatever you say, Ned," before Ned Beaumont had finished his speech.

After that neither of them said anything for a while during which Farr resumed his staring at the desk-corner and Ned Beaumont stared thoughtfully at Farr. This period of silence was ended by a soft buzzing that came from under the District Attorney's desk.

Farr picked up his telephone and said: "Yes. . . . Yes." His undershot lip crept out over the edge of the upper lip and his florid face became mottled. "The hell he's not!" he snarled. "Bring the bastard in and put him up against him and then if he don't we'll do some work on him. . . . Yes. . . . Do it." He slammed the receiver on its prong and glared at Ned Beaumont.

Ned Beaumont had paused in the act of lighting his cigar. It was in one hand. His lighter, alight, was in the other. His

face was thrust forward a little between them. His eyes glittered. He put the tip of his tongue between his lips, withdrew it, and moved his lips in a smile that had nothing to do with pleasure. "News?" he asked in a low persuasive voice.

The District Attorney's voice was savage: "Boyd West, the other brother that identified Ivans. I got to thinking about it when we were talking and sent out to see if he could still identify him. He says he's not sure, the bastard."

Ned Beaumont nodded as if this news was not unexpected. "How'll that fix things?"

"He can't get away with it," Farr snarled. "He identified him once and he'll stick to it when he gets in front of a jury. I'm having him brought in now and by the time I get through with him he'll be a good boy."

Ned Beaumont said: "Yes? And suppose he doesn't?"

The District Attorney's desk trembled under a blow from the District Attorney's fist. "He will."

Apparently Ned Beaumont was unimpressed. He lighted his cigar, extinguished and pocketed his lighter, blew smoke out, and asked in a mildly amused tone: "Sure he will, but suppose he doesn't? Suppose he looks at Tim and says: 'I'm not sure that's him?'"

Farr smote his desk again. "He won't—not when I'm through with him—he won't do anything but get up in front of the jury and say: 'That's him.'"

Amusement went out of Ned Beaumont's face and he spoke a bit wearily: "He's going to back down on the identification and you know he is. Well, what can you do about it? There's nothing you can do about it, is there? It means your case against Tim Ivans goes blooey. You found the carload of booze where he left it, but the only proof you've got that he was driving it when it ran down Norman West was the eyewitness testimony of his two brothers. Well, if Francis is dead and Boyd's afraid to talk you've got no case and you know it."

In a loud enraged voice Farr began: "If you think I'm going to sit on my—"

But with an impatient motion of the hand holding his cigar

Ned Beaumont interrupted him. "Sitting, standing, or riding a bicycle," he said, "you're licked and you know it."

"Do I? I'm District Attorney of this city and county and I—" Abruptly Farr stopped blustering. He cleared his throat and swallowed. Belligerence went out of his eyes, to be replaced first by confusion and then by something akin to fear. He leaned across the desk, too worried to keep worry from showing in his florid face. He said: "Of course you know if you—if Paul—I mean if there's any reason why I shouldn't—you know—we can let it go at that."

The smile that had nothing to do with pleasure was lifting the ends of Ned Beaumont's lips again and his eyes glittered through cigar-smoke. He shook his head slowly and spoke slowly in an unpleasantly sweet tone: "No, Farr, there isn't any reason, or none of that kind. Paul promised to spring Ivans after election, but, believe it or not, Paul never had anybody killed and, even if he did, Ivans wasn't important enough to have anybody killed for. No, Farr, there isn't any reason and I wouldn't like to think you were going around thinking there was."

"For God's sake, Ned, get me right," Farr protested. "You know damned well there's nobody in the city any stronger for Paul and for you than me. You ought to know that. I didn't mean anything by what I said except that—well, that you can always count on me."

Ned Beaumont said, "That's fine," without much enthusiasm and stood up.

Farr rose and came around the desk with a red hand out. "What's your hurry?" he asked. "Why don't you stick around and see how this West acts when they bring him in? Or"—he looked at his watch—"what are doing tonight? How about going to dinner with me?"

"Sorry I can't," Ned Beaumont replied. "I've got to run along."

He let Farr pump his hand up and down, murmured a "Yes, I will" in response to the District Attorney's insistence that he drop in often and that they get together some night, and went out.

Walter Ivans was standing beside one of a row of men operating nailing-machines in the box-factory where he was employed as foreman, when Ned Beaumont came in. He saw Ned Beaumont at once and, hailing him with an uplifted hand, came down the center aisle, but in Ivans's china-blue eyes and round fair face there was somewhat less pleasure than he seemed to be trying to put there.

Ned Beaumont said, "Lo, Walt," and by turning slightly towards the door escaped the necessity of either taking or pointedly ignoring the shorter man's proffered hand. "Let's get out of this racket."

Ivans said something that was blurred by the din of metal driving metal into wood and they went to the open door by which Ned Beaumont had entered. Outside was a wide platform of solid timber. A flight of wooden steps ran down twenty feet to the ground.

They stood on the wooden platform and Ned Beaumont asked: "You know one of the witnesses against your brother was knocked off last night?"

"Y-yes, I saw it in the p-p-paper."

Ned Beaumont asked: "You know the other one's not sure now he can identify Tim?"

"N-no, I didn't know that, N-ned."

Ned Beaumont said: "You know if he doesn't Tim'll get off."

"Y-yes."

Ned Beaumont said: "You don't look as happy about it as you ought to."

Ivans wiped his forehead with his shirt-sleeve. "B-b-but I am, N-ned, b-by God I am!"

"Did you know West? The one that was killed."

"N-no, except that I went to s-see him once, t-to ask him to g-go kind of easy on T-tim."

"What'd he say?"

"He wouldn't."



"When was that?"

Ivans shifted his feet and wiped his face with his sleeve again. "T-t-two or three d-days ago."

Ned Beaumont asked softly: "Any idea who could have killed him, Walt?"

Ivans shook his head violently from side to side.

"Any idea who could've had him killed, Walt?"

Ivans shook his head.

For a moment Ned Beaumont stared reflectively over Ivans's shoulder. The clatter of the nailing-machines came through the door ten feet away and from another story came the whirr of saws. Ivans drew in and expelled a long breath.

Ned Beaumont's mien had become sympathetic when he transferred his gaze to the shorter man's china-blue eyes again. He leaned down a little and asked: "Are you all right, Walt? I mean there are going to be people who'll think maybe you might have shot West to save your brother. Have you got-?"

"I-I-I was at the C-club all last night, from eight o'clock t-t-till after t-two this morning," Walter Ivans replied as rapidly as the impediment in his speech permitted. "Harry Sloss and B-ben Ferriss and Brager c-c-can tell you."

Ned Beaumont laughed. "That's a lucky break for you, Walt," he said gaily.

He turned his back on Walter Ivans and went down the wooden steps to the street. He paid no attention to Walter Ivans's very friendly "Good-by, Ned."

4

From the box-factory Ned Beaumont walked four blocks to a restaurant and used a telephone. He called the four numbers he had called earlier in the day, asking again for Paul Madvig and, not getting him on the wire, left instructions for Madvig to call him. Then he got a taxicab and went home.

Additional pieces of mail had been put with those already on the table by his door. He hung up his hat and overcoat, lighted a cigar, and sat down with his mail in the largest of the red-plush chairs. The fourth envelope he opened was similar to

the one the District Attorney had shown him. It contained a single sheet of paper bearing three typewritten sentences without salutation or signature:

Did you find Taylor Henry's body after he was dead or were you present when he was murdered?

Why did you not report his death until after the police had found the body?

Do you think you can save the guilty by manufacturing evidence against the innocent?

Ned Beaumont screwed up his eyes and wrinkled his forehead over this message and drew much smoke from his cigar. He compared it with the one the District Attorney had received. Paper and typing were alike, as were the manner in which each paper's three sentences were arranged and the time of the post-marks.

Scowling, he returned each to its envelope and put them in his pocket, only to take them out again immediately to reread and re-examine them. Too rapid smoking made his cigar burn irregularly down one side. He put the cigar on the edge of the table beside him with a grimace of distaste and picked at his mustache with nervous fingers. He put the messages away once more and leaned back in his chair, staring at the ceiling and biting a finger-nail. He ran fingers through his hair. He put the end of a finger between his collar and his neck. He sat up and took the envelopes out of his pocket again, but put them back without having looked at them. He chewed his lower lip. Finally he shook himself impatiently and began to read the rest of his mail. He was reading it when the telephone-bell rang.

He went to the telephone. "Hello. . . . Oh, 'lo, Paul, where are you? . . . How long will you be there? . . . Yes, fine, drop in on your way. . . . Right, I'll be here."

He returned to his mail.

5

Paul Madvig arrived at Ned Beaumont's rooms as the bells in the grey church across the street were ringing the Angelus.

He came in saying heartily: "Howdy, Ned. When'd you get back?" His big body was clothed in grey tweeds.

"Late this morning," Ned Beaumont replied as they shook hands.

"Make out all right?"

Ned Beaumont showed the edges of his teeth in a contented smile. "I got what I went after—all of it."

"That's great." Madvig threw his hat on a chair and sat on another beside the fireplace.

Ned Beaumont returned to his chair. "Anything happen while I was gone?" he asked as he picked up the half-filled cocktail-glass standing beside the silver shaker on the table at his elbow.

"We got the muddle on the sewer-contract straightened out."

Ned Beaumont sipped his cocktail and asked: "Have to make much of a cut?"

"Too much. There won't be anything like the profit there ought to be, but that's better than taking a chance on stirring things up this close to election. We'll make it up on the street-work next year when the Salem and Chestnut extensions go through."

Ned Beaumont nodded. He was looking at the blond man's outstretched crossed ankles. He said: "You oughtn't to wear silk socks with tweeds."

Madvig raised a leg straight out to look at the ankle. "No? I like the feel of silk."

"Then lay off tweeds. Taylor Henry buried?"

"Friday."

"Go to the funeral?"

"Yes," Madvig replied and added a little self-consciously: "The Senator suggested it."

Ned Beaumont put his glass on the table and touched his lips with a white handkerchief taken from the outer breast-pocket of his coat. "How is the Senator?" He looked obliquely at the blond man and did not conceal the amusement in his eyes.

Madvig replied, still somewhat self-consciously: "He's all

right. I spent most of this afternoon up there with him."

"At his house?"

"Uh-huh."

"Was the blonde menace there?"

Madvig did not quite frown. He said: "Janet was there."

Ned Beaumont, putting his handkerchief away, made a choked gurgling sound in his throat and said: "M-m-m. It's Janet now. Getting anywhere with her?"

Composure came back to Madvig. He said evenly: "I still think I'm going to marry her."

"Does she know yet that—that your intentions are honorable?"

"For Christ's sake, Ned!" Madvig protested. "How long are you going to keep me on the witness-stand?"

Ned Beaumont laughed, picked up the silver shaker, shook it, and poured himself another drink. "How do you like the Francis West killing?" he asked when he was sitting back with the glass in his hand.

Madvig seemed puzzled for a moment. Then his face cleared and he said: "Oh, that's the fellow that got shot on Achland Avenue last night."

"That's the fellow."

A fainter shade of puzzlement returned to Madvig's blue eyes. He said: "Well, I didn't know him."

Ned Beaumont said: "He ~~was~~ one of the witnesses against Walter Ivans's brother. Now the other witness, Boyd West, is afraid to testify, so the rap falls through."

"That's swell," Madvig said, but by the time the last word had issued from his mouth a doubtful look had come into his eyes. He drew his legs in and leaned forward. "Afraid?" he asked.

"Yes, unless you like scared better."

Madvig's face hardened into attentiveness and his eyes became stony blue disks. "What are you getting at, Ned?" he asked in a crisp voice.

Ned Beaumont emptied his glass and set it on the table. "After you told Walt Ivans you couldn't spring Tim till election was out of the way he took his troubles to Shad O'Rory," he said

in a deliberate monotone, as if reciting a lesson. "Shad sent some of his gorillas around to scare the two Wests out of appearing against Tim. One of them wouldn't scare and they bumped him off."

Madvig, scowling, objected: "What the hell does Shad care about Tim Ivans's troubles?"

Ned Beaumont, reaching for the cocktail-shaker, said irritably: "All right, I'm just guessing. Forget it."

"Cut it out, Ned. You know your guesses are good enough for me. If you've got anything on your mind, spill it."

Ned Beaumont set the shaker down without having poured a drink and said: "It might be just a guess, at that, Paul, but this is the way it looks to me. Everybody knows Walt Ivans's been working for you down in the Third Ward and is a member of the Club and everything and that you'd do anything you could to get his brother out of a jam if he asked you. Well, everybody, or a lot of them, is going to start wondering whether you didn't have the witnesses against his brother shot and frightened into silence. That goes for the outsiders, the women's clubs you're getting so afraid of these days, and the respectable citizens. The insiders—the ones that mostly wouldn't care if you had done that—are going to get something like the real news. They're going to know that one of your boys had to go to Shad to get fixed up and that Shad fixed him up. Well, that's the hole Shad's put you in—or don't you think he'd go that far to put you in a hole?"

Madvig growled through his teeth: "I know damned well he would, the louse." He was lowering down at a green leaf worked in the rug at his feet.

Ned Beaumont, after looking intently at the blond man, went on: "And there's another angle to look for. Maybe it won't happen, but you're open to it if Shad wants to work it."

Madvig looked up to ask: "What?"

"Walt Ivans was at the Club all last night, till two this morning. That's about three hours later than he ever stayed there before except on election- or banquet-nights. Understand? He was making himself an alibi—in our Club. Suppose"—Ned Beau-

mont's voice sank to a lower key and his dark eyes were round and grave—"Shad jobs Walt by planting evidence that he killed West? Your women's clubs and all the people who like to squawk about things like that are going to think that Walt's alibi is phony—that we fixed it up to shield him."

Madvig said: "The louse." He stood up and thrust his hands into his trousers-pockets. "I wish to Christ the election was either over or further away."

"None of this would've happened then."

Madvig took two steps into the center of the room. He muttered, "God damn him," and stood frowning at the telephone on the stand beside the bedroom-door. His huge chest moved with his breathing. He said from the side of his mouth, without looking at Ned Beaumont: "Figure out a way of blocking that angle." He took a step towards the telephone and halted. "Never mind," he said and turned to face Ned Beaumont. "I think I'll knock Shad loose from our little city. I'm tired of having him around. I think I'll knock him loose right away, starting tonight."

Ned Beaumont asked: "For instance?"

Madvig grinned. "For instance," he replied, "I think I'll have Rainey close up the Dog House and Paradise Gardens and every dive that we know Shad or any of his friends are interested in. I think I'll have Rainey smack them over in one long row, one after the other, this very same night."

Ned Beaumont spoke hesitantly: "You're putting Rainey in a tough spot. Our coppers aren't used to bothering with Prohibition-enforcement. They're not going to like it very much."

"They can do it once for me," Madvig said, "without feeling that they've paid all their debts."

"Maybe." Ned Beaumont's face and voice were dubious still. "But this wholesale stuff is too much like using a cyclone shot to blow off a safe-door when you could get it off without any fuss by using a come-along."

"Have you got something up your sleeve, Ned?"

Ned Beaumont shook his head. "Nothing I'm sure of, but it wouldn't hurt to wait a couple of days till—"

Now Madvig shook his head. "No," he said. "I want action. I don't know a damned thing about opening safes, Ned, but I do know fighting—my kind—going in with both hands working. I never could learn to box and the only times I ever tried I got licked. We'll give Mr. O'Rory the cyclone shot."

## 6

The stringy man in horn-rimmed spectacles said: "So you don't have to worry none about that." He sat complacently back in his chair.

The man on his left—a raw-boned man with a bushy brown mustache and not much hair on his head—said to the man on his left: "It don't sound so God-damned swell to me."

"No?" The stringy man turned to glare through his spectacles at the raw-boned man. "Well, Paul don't never have to come down to my ward hisself to—"

The raw-boned man said: "Aw, nurts!"

Madvig addressed the raw-boned man: "Did you see Parker, Breen?"

Breen said: "Yes, I saw him and he says five, but I think we can get a couple more out of him."

The bespectacled man said contemptuously: "My God, I'd think so!"

Breen sneered sidewise at him. "Yes? And who'd you ever get that much out of?"

Three knocks sounded on the broad oaken door.

Ned Beaumont rose from the chair he was straddling and went to the door. He opened it less than a foot.

The man who had knocked was a small-browed dark man in blue clothes that needed pressing. He did not try to enter the room and he tried to speak in an undertone, but excitement made his words audible to everyone in the room. "Shad O'Rory's downstairs. He wants to see Paul."

Ned Beaumont shut the door and turned with his back against it to look at Paul Madvig. Only those two of the ten men in the room seemed undisturbed by the small-browed man's announcement. All the others did not show their excitement frank-

ly—in some it could be seen in their suddenly acquired stoniness—but there was none whose respiration was exactly as it had been before.

Ned Beaumont, pretending he did not know repetition was unnecessary, said, in a tone that expressed suitable interest in his words: "O'Rory wants to see you. He's downstairs."

Madvig looked at his watch. "Tell him I'm tied up right now, but if he'll wait a little while I'll see him."

Ned Beaumont nodded and opened the door. "Tell him Paul's busy now," he instructed the man who had knocked, "but if he'll stick around awhile Paul'll see him." He shut the door.

Madvig was questioning a square-faced yellowish man about their chances of getting more votes on the other side of Chestnut Street. The square-faced man replied that he thought they would get more than last time "by a hell of a sight," but still not enough to make much of a dent in the opposition. While he talked his eyes kept crawling sidewise to the door.

Ned Beaumont sat astride his chair by the window again smoking a cigar.

Madvig addressed to another man a question having to do with the size of the campaign-contribution to be expected from a man named Hartwick. This other man kept his eyes from the door, but his reply lacked coherence.

Neither Madvig's and Ned Beaumont's calmness of mien nor their business-like concentration on campaign-problems could check the growth of tension in the room.

After fifteen minutes Madvig rose and said: "Well, we're not on Easy Street yet, but she's shaping up. Keep hard at it and we'll make the grade." He went to the door and shook each man's hand as they went out. They went out somewhat hurriedly.

Ned Beaumont, who had not left his chair, asked, when he and Madvig were the only ones in the room: "Do I stick around or beat it?"

"Stick around." Madvig crossed to the window and looked down into sunny China Street.



"Both hands working?" Ned Beaumont asked after a little pause.

Madvig turned from the window nodding. "I don't know anything else"—he grinned boyishly at the man straddling the chair—"except maybe the feet too."

Ned Beaumont started to say something, but was interrupted by the noise the turning door-knob made.

A man opened the door and came in. He was a man of little more than medium height, trimly built with a trimness that gave him a deceptively frail appearance. Though his hair was a sheer sleek white he was probably not much past his thirty-fifth year. His eyes were a notable clear grey-blue set in a rather long and narrow, but very finely sculptured, face. He wore a dark blue overcoat over a dark blue suit and carried a black derby hat in a black-gloved hand.

The man who came in behind him was a bow-legged ruffian of the same height, a swarthy man with something apish in the slope of his big shoulders, the length of his thick arms, and the flatness of his face. This one's hat—a grey fedora—was on his head. He shut the door and leaned against it, putting his hands in the pockets of his plaid overcoat.

The first man, having advanced by then some four or five steps into the room, put his hat on a chair and began to take off his gloves.

Madvig, hands in trousers-pockets, smiled amiably and said: "How are you, Shad?"

The white-haired man said: "Fine, Paul. How's yourself?" His voice was a musical barytone. The faintest of brogues colored his words.

Madvig indicated with a small jerk of his head the man on the chair and asked: "You know Beaumont?"

O'Rory said: "Yes."

Ned Beaumont said: "Yes."

Neither nodded to the other and Ned Beaumont did not get up from his chair.

Shad O'Rory had finished taking off his gloves. He put them in an overcoat-pocket and said: "Politics is politics and busi-

ness is business. I've been paying my way and I'm willing to go on paying my way, but I want what I'm paying for." His modulated voice no more than pleasantly earnest.

"What do you mean by that?" Madvig asked as if he did not greatly care.

"I mean that half the coppers in town are buying their cakes and ale with dough they're getting from me and some of my friends."

Madvig sat down by the table. "Well?" he asked, carelessly as before.

"I want what I'm paying for. I'm paying to be let alone. I want to be let alone."

Madvig chuckled. "You don't mean, Shad, that you're complaining to me because your coppers won't stay bought?"

"I mean that Doolan told me last night that the orders to shut up my places came straight from you."

Madvig chuckled again and turned his head to address Ned Beaumont: "What do you think of that, Ned?"

Ned Beaumont smiled thinly, but said nothing.

Madvig said: "You know what I think of it? I think Captain Doolan's been working too hard. I think somebody ought to give Captain Doolan a nice long leave of absence. Don't let me forget it."

O'Rory said: "I bought protection, Paul, and I want it. Business is business and politics is politics. Let's keep them apart."

**Madvig said: "No."**

Shad O'Rory's blue eyes looked dreamily at some distant thing. He smiled a little sadly and there was a note of sadness in his musical slightly Irish voice when he spoke. He said: "It's going to mean killing."

Madvig's blue eyes were opaque and his voice was as difficultly read as his eyes. He said: "If you make it mean killing."

The white-haired man nodded. "It'll have to mean killing," he said, still sadly. "I'm too big to take the boot from you now."

Madvig leaned back in his chair and crossed his legs. His tone attached little importance to his words. He said: "Maybe you're too big to take it laying down, but you'll take it." He pursed his lips and added as an afterthought: "You are taking it."

Dreaminess and sadness went swiftly out of Shad O'Rory's eyes. He put his black hat on his head. He adjusted his coat-collar to his neck. He pointed a long white finger at Madvig and said: "I'm opening the Dog House again tonight. I don't want to be bothered. Bother me and I'll bother you."

Madvig uncrossed his legs and reached for the telephone on the table. He called the Police Department's number, asked for the Chief, and said to him: "Hello, Rainey. . . . Yes, fine. How are the folks? . . . That's good. Say, Rainey, I hear Shad's thinking of opening up again tonight. . . . Yes. . . . Yes, slam it down so hard it bounces. . . . Right. . . . Sure. Good-by." He pushed the telephone back and addressed O'Rory: "Now do you understand how you stand? You're through, Shad. You're through here for good."

O'Rory said softly, "I understand," turned, opened the door, and went out.

The bow-legged ruffian paused to spit—deliberately—on the rug in front of him and to stare with bold challenging eyes at Madvig and Ned Beaumont. Then he went out.

Ned Beaumont wiped the palms of his hands with a handkerchief. He said nothing to Madvig, who was looking at him with questioning eyes. Ned Beaumont's eyes were gloomy.

After a moment Madvig asked: "Well?"

Ned Beaumont said: "Wrong, Paul."

Madvig rose and went to the window. "Jesus Christ!" he complained over his shoulder, "don't anything ever suit you?"

Ned Beaumont got up from his chair and walked towards the door.

Madvig, turning from the window, asked angrily: "Some more of your God-damned foolishness?"

Ned Beaumont said, "Yes," and went out of the room. He went downstairs, got his hat, and left the Log Cabin Club.

He walked seven blocks to the railroad station, bought a ticket for New York, and made reservations on a night train. Then he took a taxicab to his rooms.

7

A stout shapeless woman in grey clothes and a chubby half-grown boy were packing Ned Beaumont's trunk and three leather bags under his supervision when the door-bell rang.

The woman rose grunting from her knees and went to the door. She opened it wide. "My goodness, Mr. Madvig," she said. "Come right on in."

Madvig came in saying: "How are you, Mrs. Duveen? You get younger-looking every day." His gaze passed over the trunk and bags to the boy. "Hello, Charley. Ready for the job running the cement-mixer yet?"

The boy grinned bashfully and said: "How do you do, Mr. Madvig?"

Madvig's smile came around to Ned Beaumont. "Going places?"

Ned Beaumont smiled politely. "Yes," he said.

The blond man looked around the room, at the bags and trunk again, at the clothes piled on chairs and the drawers standing open. The woman and the boy went back to their work. Ned Beaumont found two somewhat faded shirts in a pile on a chair and put them aside.

Madvig asked: "Got half an hour to spare, Ned?"

"I've got plenty of time."

Madvig said: "Get your hat."

Ned Beaumont got his hat and overcoat. "Get as much of it in as you can," he told the woman as he and Madvig moved towards the door, "and what's left over can be sent on with the other stuff."

He and Madvig went downstairs to the street. They walked south a block. Then Madvig asked: "Where're you going, Ned?"

"New York."

They turned into an alley. Madvig asked: "For good?"

Ned Beaumont shrugged. "I'm leaving here for good."

They opened a green wooden door set in the red brick rear wall of a building and went down a passageway and through another door into a bar-room where half a dozen men were drinking. They exchanged greetings with the bar-tender and three of the drinkers as they passed through to a small room where there were four tables. Nobody else was there. They sat at one of the tables.

The bar-tender put his head in and asked: "Beer as per usual, gents?"

Madvig said, "Yes," and then, when the bar-tender had withdrawn: "Why?"

Ned Beaumont said: "I'm tired of hick-town stuff."

"Meaning me?"

Ned Beaumont did not say anything.

Madvig did not say anything for a while. Then he sighed and said: "This is a hell of a time to be throwing me down."

The bar-tender came in with two seidels of pale beer and a bowl of pretzels. When he had gone out again, shutting the door behind him, Madvig exclaimed: "Christ, you're hard to get along with, Ned!"

Ned Beaumont moved his shoulders. "I never said I wasn't." He lifted his seidel and drank.

Madvig was breaking a pretzel into small bits. "Do you really want to go, Ned?" he asked.

"I'm going."

Madvig dropped the fragments of pretzel on the table and took a check-book from his pocket. He tore out a check, took a fountain-pen from another pocket, and filled in the check. Then he fanned it dry and dropped it on the table in front of Ned Beaumont.

Ned Beaumont, looking down at the check, shook his head and said: "I don't need money and you don't owe me anything."

"I do. I owe you more than that, Ned. I wish you'd take it."

Ned Beaumont said, "All right, thanks," and put the check in his pocket.

Madvig drank beer, ate a pretzel, started to drink again, set

his seidel down on the table, and asked: "Was there anything on your mind—any kick—besides that back in the Club this afternoon?"

Ned Beaumont shook his head. "You don't talk to me like that. Nobody does."

"Hell, Ned, I didn't say anything."

Ned Beaumont did not say anything.

Madvig drank again. "Mind telling me why you think I handled O'Rory wrong?"

"It wouldn't do any good."

"Try."

Ned Beaumont said: "All right, but it won't do any good." He tilted his chair back, holding his seidel in one hand, some pretzels in the other. "Shad'll fight. He's got to. You've got him in a corner. You've told him he's through here for good. There's nothing he can do now but play the long shot. If he can upset you this election he'll be fixed to square anything he has to do to win. If you win the election he's got to drift anyhow. You're using the police on him. He'll have to fight back at the police and he will. That means you're going to have something that can be made to look like a crime-wave. You're trying to re-elect the whole city administration. Well, giving them a crime-wave—and one it's an even bet they're not going to be able to handle—just before election isn't going to make them look any too efficient. They—"

"You think I ought to've laid down to him?" Madvig demanded, scowling.

"I don't think that. I think you should have left him an out, a line of retreat. You shouldn't have got him with his back to the wall."

Madvig's scowl deepened. "I don't know anything about your kind of fighting. He started it. All I know is when you got somebody cornered you go in and finish them. That system's worked all right for me so far." He blushed a little. "I don't mean I think I'm Napoleon or something, Ned, but I came up from running errands for Packy Flood in the old Fifth to where I'm sitting kind of pretty today."

Ned Beaumont emptied his scidcl and let the front legs of his chair come down on the floor. "I told you it wouldn't do any good," he said. "Have it your own way. Keep on thinking that what was good enough for the old Fifth is good enough anywhere."

In Madvig's voice there was something of resentment and something of humility when he asked: "You don't think much of me as a big-time politician, do you, Ned?"

Now Ned Beaumont's face flushed. He said: "I didn't say that, Paul."

"But that's what it amounts to, isn't it?" Madvig insisted.

"No, but I do think you've let yourself be outsmarted this time. First you let the Henrys wheedle you into backing the Senator. There was your chance to go in and finish an enemy who was cornered, but that enemy happened to have a daughter and social position and what not, so you—"

"Cut it out, Ned," Madvig grumbled.

Ned Beaumont's face became empty of expression. He stood up saying, "Well, I must be running along," and turned to the door.

Madvig was up behind him immediately, with a hand on his shoulder, saying: "Wait, Ned."

Ned Beaumont said: "Take your hand off me." He did not look around.

Madvig put his other hand on Ned Beaumont's arm and turned him around. "Look here, Ned," he began.

Ned Beaumont said: "Let go." His lips were pale and stiff.

Madvig shook him. He said: "Don't be a God-damned fool. You and I—"

Ned Beaumont struck Madvig's mouth with his left fist.

Madvig took his hands away from Ned Beaumont and fell back two steps. While his pulse had time to beat perhaps three times his mouth hung open and astonishment was in his face. Then his face darkened with anger and he shut his mouth tight, so his jaw was hard and lumpy. He made fists of his hands, hunched his shoulders, and swayed forward.

Ned Beaumont's hand swept out to the side to grasp one of

the heavy glass scidels on the table, though he did not lift it from the table. His body leaned a little to that side as he had leaned to get the scidel. Otherwise he stood squarely confronting the blond man. His face was drawn thin and rigid, with white lines of strain around the mouth. His dark eyes glared fiercely into Madvig's blue ones.

They stood thus, less than a yard apart—one blond, tall and powerfully built, leaning far forward, big shoulders hunched, big fists ready; the other dark of hair and eye, tall and lean, body bent a little to one side with an arm slanting down from that side to hold a heavy glass scidel by its handle—and except for their breathing there was no sound in the room. No sound came in from the bar-room on the other side of the thin door, the rattling of glasses nor the hum of talk nor the splash of water.

When quite two minutes had passed Ned Beaumont took his hand away from the scidel and turned his back to Madvig. Nothing changed in Ned Beaumont's face except that his eyes, when no longer focused on Madvig's, became hard and cold instead of angrily glaring. He took an unhurried step towards the door.

Madvig spoke hoarsely from deep down in him. "Ned."

Ned Beaumont halted. His face became paler. He did not turn around.

Madvig said: "You crazy son of a bitch."

Then Ned Beaumont turned around, slowly.

Madvig put out an open hand and pushed Ned Beaumont's face sidewise, shoving him off balance so he had to put a foot out quickly to that side and put a hand on one of the chairs at the table.

Madvig said: "I ought to knock hell out of you."

Ned Beaumont grinned sheepishly and sat down on the chair he had staggered against. Madvig sat down facing him and knocked on the top of the table with his scidel.

The bar-tender opened the door and put his head in.

"More beer," Madvig said.

From the bar-room, through the open door, came the sound



of men talking and the sound of glasses rattling against glasses and against wood.

## IV. THE DOG HOUSE

### I

Ned Beaumont, at breakfast in bed, called, "Come in," and then, when the outer door had opened and closed: "Yes?"

A low-pitched rasping voice in the living-room asked: "Where are you, Ned?" Before Ned Beaumont could reply the rasping voice's owner had come to the bedroom-door and was saying: "Pretty soft for you." He was a sturdy young man with a square-cut sallow face, a wide thick-lipped mouth, from a corner of which a cigarette dangled, and merry dark squinting eyes.

"Lo, Whisky," Ned Beaumont said to him. "Treat yourself to a chair."

Whisky looked around the room. "Pretty good dump you've got here," he said. He removed the cigarette from his lips and, without turning his head, used the cigarette to point over his shoulder at the living-room behind him. "What's all the key-sters for? Moving out?"

Ned Beaumont thoroughly chewed and swallowed the scrambled eggs in his mouth before replying: "Thinking of it."

Whisky said, "Yes?" while moving towards a chair that faced the bed. He sat down. "Where to?"

"New York maybe."

"What do you mean maybe?"

Ned Beaumont said: "Well, I've got a ducat that reads to there, anyway."

Whisky knocked cigarette-ash on the floor and returned the cigarette to the left side of his mouth. He snuffed. "How long you going to be gone?"

Ned Beaumont held a coffee-cup half-way between the tray and his mouth. He looked thoughtfully over it at the sallow young man. Finally he said, "It's a one-way ticket," and drank.

Whisky squinted at Ned Beaumont now until one of his dark eyes was entirely shut and the other was no more than a thin black gleam. He took the cigarette from his mouth and knocked more ash on the floor. His rasping voice held a persuasive note. "Why don't you see Shad before you go?" he suggested.

Ned Beaumont put his cup down and smiled. He said: "Shad and I aren't good enough friends that his feelings'll be hurt if I go away without saying good-by."

Whisky said: "That ain't the point."

Ned Beaumont moved the tray from his lap to the bedside-table. He turned on his side, propping himself up on an elbow on the pillows. He pulled the bed-clothes higher up over his chest. Then he asked: "What is the point?"

"The point is you and Shad ought to be able to do business together."

Ned Beaumont shook his head. "I don't think so."

"Can't you be wrong?" Whisky demanded.

"Sure," the man in bed confessed. "Once back in 1912 I was. I forget what it was about."

Whisky rose to mash his cigarette in one of the dishes on the tray. Standing beside the bed, close to the table, he said: "Why don't you try it, Ned?"

Ned Beaumont frowned. "Looks like a waste of time, Whisky. I don't think Shad and I could get along together."

Whisky sucked a tooth noisily. The downward curve of his thick lips gave the noise a scornful cast. "Shad thinks you could," he said.

Ned Beaumont opened his eyes. "Yes?" he asked. "He sent you here?"

"Hell, yes," Whisky said. "You don't think I'd be here talking like this if he hadn't."

Ned Beaumont narrowed his eyes again and asked: "Why?"

"Because he thought him and you could do business together."

"I mean," Ned Beaumont explained, "why did he think I'd want to do business with him?"

Whisky made a disgusted face. "Are you trying to kid me, Ned?" he asked.

"No."

"Well, for the love of Christ, don't you think everybody in town knows about you and Paul having it out at Pip Carson's yesterday?"

Ned Beaumont nodded. "So that's it," he said softly, as if to himself.

"That's it," the man with the rasping voice assured him, "and Shad happens to know you fell out over thinking Paul hadn't ought to've had Shad's joints smeared. So you're sitting pretty with Shad now if you use your head."

Ned Beaumont said thoughtfully: "I don't know. I'd like to get out of here, get back to the big city."

"Use your head," Whisky rasped. "The big city'll still be there after election. Stick around. You know Shad's dough-heavy and's putting it out in chunks to beat Madvig. Stick around and get yourself a slice of it."

"Well," Ned Beaumont said slowly, "it wouldn't hurt to talk it over with him."

"You're damned right it wouldn't," Whisky said heartily. "Pin your diapers on and we'll go now."

Ned Beaumont said, "Right," and got out of bed.

2

Shad O'Rory rose and bowed. "Glad to see you, Beaumont," he said. "Drop your hat and coat anywhere." He did not offer to shake hands.

Ned Beaumont said, "Good morning," and began to take off his overcoat.

Whisky, in the doorway, said: "Well, I'll be seeing you guys later."

O'Rory said, "Yes, do," and Whisky, drawing the door shut as he backed out, left them.

Ned Beaumont dropped his overcoat on the arm of a sofa,

put his hat on the overcoat, and sat down beside them. He looked without curiosity at O'Rory.

O'Rory had returned to his chair, a deeply padded squat affair of dull wine and gold. He crossed his knees and put his hands together—tips of fingers and thumbs touching—atop his uppermost knee. He let his finely sculptured head sink down towards his chest so that his grey-blue eyes looked upward under his brows at Ned Beaumont. He said, in his pleasantly modulated Irish voice: "I owe you something for trying to talk Paul out of—"

"You don't," Ned Beaumont said.

O'Rory asked: "I don't?"

"No. I was with him then. What I told him was for his own good. I thought he was making a bad play."

O'Rory smiled gently. "And he'll know it before he's through," he said.

Silence was between them awhile then. O'Rory sat half-buried in his chair smiling at Ned Beaumont. Ned Beaumont sat on the sofa looking, with eyes that gave no indication of what he thought, at O'Rory.

The silence was broken by O'Rory asking: "How much did Whisky tell you?"

"Nothing. He said you wanted to see me."

"He was right enough as far as he went," O'Rory said. He took his finger-tips apart and patted the back of one slender hand with the palm of the other. "Is it so that you and Paul have broken for good and all?"

"I thought you knew it," Ned Beaumont replied. "I thought that's why you sent for me."

"I heard it," O'Rory said, "but that's not always the same thing. What were you thinking you might do now?"

"There's a ticket for New York in my pocket and my clothes are packed."

O'Rory raised a hand and smoothed his sleek white hair. "You came here from New York, didn't you?"

"I never told anybody where I came from."

O'Rory took his hand from his hair and made a small ges-

ture of protestation. "You don't think I'm one to give a damn where any man comes from, do you?" he asked.

Ned Beaumont did not say anything.

The white-haired man said: "But I do care about where you go and if I have my way as much as I'd like you won't be going off to New York yet awhile. Did you never happen to think that maybe you could still do yourself a lot of good right here?"

"No," Ned Beaumont said, "that is, not till Whisky came."

"And what do you think now?"

"I don't know anything about it. I'm waiting to hear what you've got to say."

O'Rory put his hand to his hair again. His blue-grey eyes were friendly and shrewd. He asked: "How long have you been here?"

"Fifteen months."

"And you and Paul have been close as a couple of fingers how long?"

"Year."

O'Rory nodded. "And you ought to know a lot of things about him," he said.

"I do."

O'Rory said: "You ought to know a lot of things I could use."

Ned Beaumont said evenly: "Make your proposition."

O'Rory got up from the depths of his chair and went to a door opposite the one through which Ned Beaumont had come. When he opened the door a huge English bulldog waddled in. O'Rory went back to his chair. The dog lay on the rug in front of the wine and gold chair staring with morose eyes up at its master.

O'Rory said: "One thing I can offer you is a chance to pay Paul back plenty."

Ned Beaumont said: "That's nothing to me."

"It is not?"

"Far as I'm concerned we're quits."

O'Rory raised his head. He asked softly: "And you wouldn't

want to do anything to hurt him?"

"I didn't say that," Ned Beaumont replied a bit irritably. "I don't mind hurting him, but I can do it any time I want to on my own account and I don't want you to think you're giving me anything when you give me a chance to."

O'Rory wagged his head up and down, pleasantly. "Suits me," he said, "so he's hurt. Why did he bump off young Henry?"

Ned Beaumont laughed. "Take it easy," he said. "You haven't made your proposition yet. That's a nice pooch. How old is he?"

"Just about the limit, seven." O'Rory put out a foot and rubbed the dog's nose with the tip of it. The dog moved its tail sluggishly. "How does this hit you? After election I'll stake you to the finest gambling-house this state's ever seen and let you run it to suit yourself with all the protection you ever heard of."

"That's an *if* offer," Ned Beaumont said in a somewhat bored manner, "*if* you win. Anyhow, I'm not sure I want to stay here after election, or even that long."

O'Rory stopped rubbing the dog's nose with his shoe-tip. He looked up at Ned Beaumont again, smiled dreamily, and asked: "Don't you think we're going to win the election?"

Ned Beaumont smiled. "You won't bet even money on it."

O'Rory, still smiling dreamily, asked another question: "You're not so God-damned hot for putting in with me, are you, Beaumont?"

"No." Ned Beaumont rose and picked up his hat. "It wasn't any idea of mine." His voice was casual, his face politely expressionless. "I told Whisky it'd just be wasting time." He reached for his overcoat.

The white-haired man said: "Sit down. We can still talk, can't we? And maybe we'll get somewhere before we're through."

Ned Beaumont hesitated, moved his shoulders slightly, took off his hat, put it and his overcoat on the sofa, and sat down beside them.

O'Rory said: "I'll give you ten grand in cash right now if you'll come in and ten more election-night if we beat Paul and I'll keep that house-offer open for you to take or leave."

Ned Beaumont pursed his lips and stared gloomily at O'Rory under brows drawn together. "You want me to rat on him, of course," he said.

"I want you to go into the *Observer* with the lowdown on everything you know about him being mixed up in—the sewer-contracts, the how and why of killing Taylor Henry, that Shoemaker junk last winter, the dirt on how he's running the city."

"There's nothing in the sewer-business now," Ned Beaumont said, speaking as if his mind was more fully occupied with other thoughts. "He let his profits go to keep from raising a stink."

"All right," O'Rory conceded, blandly confident, "but there is something in the Taylor Henry business."

"Yes, we'd have him there," Ned Beaumont said, frowning, "but I don't know whether we could use the Shoemaker stuff"—he hesitated—"without making trouble for me."

"Hell, we don't want that," O'Rory said quickly. "That's out. What else have we got?"

"Maybe we can do something with the street-car-franchise extension and with that trouble last year in the County Clerk's office. We'll have to do some digging first, though."

"It'll be worth it for both of us," O'Rory said. "I'll have Hinkle—he's the *Observer* guy—put the stuff in shape. You just give him the dope and let him write it. We can start off with the Taylor Henry thing. That's something that's right on tap."

Ned Beaumont brushed his mustache with a thumb-nail and murmured: "Maybe."

Shad O'Rory laughed. "You mean we ought to start off first with the ten thousand dollars?" he asked. "There's something in that." He got up and crossed the room to the door he had opened for the dog. He opened it and went out, shutting it behind him. The dog did not get up from in front of the wine and gold chair.

Ned Beaumont lit a cigar. The dog turned his head and watched him.

O'Rory came back with a thick sheaf of green hundred-dollar bills held together by a band of brown paper on which was written in blue ink: \$10,000. He thumped the sheaf down on the hand not holding it and said: "Hinkle's out there now. I told him to come in."

Ned Beaumont frowned. "I ought to have a little time to straighten it out in my mind."

"Give it to Hinkle any way it comes to you. He'll put it in shape."

Ned Beaumont nodded. He blew cigar-smoke out and said: "Yes, I can do that."

O'Rory held out the sheaf of paper money.

Saying, "Thanks," Ned Beaumont took it and put it in his inside coat-pocket. It made a bulge there in the breast of his coat over his flat chest.

Shad O'Rory said, "The thanks go both ways," and went back to his chair.

Ned Beaumont took the cigar out of his mouth. "Here's something I want to tell you while I think of it," he said. "Framing Walt Ivans for the West killing won't bother Paul as much as leaving it as it is."

O'Rory looked curiously at Ned Beaumont for a moment before asking: "Why?"

"Paul's not going to let him have the Club alibi."

"You mean he's going to give the boys orders to forget Ivans was there?"

"Yes."

O'Rory made a clucking noise with his tongue, asked: "How'd he get the idea I was going to play tricks on Ivans?"

"Oh, we figured it out."

O'Rory smiled. "You mean you did," he said. "Paul's not that shifty."

Ned Beaumont made a modest grimace and asked: "What kind of job did you put up on him?"

O'Rory chuckled. "We sent the clown over to Braywood to buy the guns that were used." His grey-blue eyes suddenly became hard and sharp. Then amusement came back into them



and he said: "Oh, well, none of that's big stuff now, now that Paul's hell-bent on making a row of it. But that's what started him picking on me, isn't it?"

"Yes," Ned Beaumont told him, "though it was likely to come sooner or later anyhow. Paul thinks he gave you your start here and you ought to stay under his wing and not grow big enough to buck him."

O'Rory smiled gently. "And I'm the boy that'll make him sorry he ever gave me that start," he promised. "He can--"

A door opened and a man came in. He was a young man in baggy grey clothes. His ears and nose were very large. His indefinitely brown hair needed trimming and his rather grimy face was too deeply lined for his years.

"Come in, Hinkle," O'Rory said. "This is Beaumont. He'll give you the dope. Let me see it when you've shaped it up and we'll get the first shot in tomorrow's paper."

Hinkle smiled with bad teeth and muttered something unintelligibly polite to Ned Beaumont.

Ned Beaumont stood up saying: "Fine. We'll go over to my place now and get to work on it."

O'Rory shook his head. "It'll be better here," he said.

Ned Beaumont, picking up hat and overcoat, smiled and said: "Sorry, but I'm expecting some phone-calls and things. Get your hat, Hinkle."

Hinkle, looking frightened, stood still and dumb.

O'Rory said: "You'll have to stay here, Beaumont. We can't afford to have anything happen to you. Here you'll have plenty of protection."

Ned Beaumont smiled his nicest smile. "If it's the money you're worried about"--he put his hand inside his coat and brought it out holding the money--"you can hang on to it till I've turned in the stuff."

"I'm not worried about anything," O'Rory said calmly. "But you're in a tough spot if Paul gets the news you've come over to me and I don't want to take any chances on having you knocked off."

"You'll have to take them," Ned Beaumont said. "I'm going."

O'Rory said: "No."

Ned Beaumont said: "Yes."

Hinkle turned quickly and went out of the room.

Ned Beaumont turned around and started for the other door, the one through which he had come into the room, walking erectly without haste.

O'Rory spoke to the bulldog at his feet. The dog got up in cumbersome haste and waddled around Ned Beaumont to the door. He stood on wide-spread legs in front of the door and stared morosely at Ned Beaumont.

Ned Beaumont smiled with tight lips and turned to face O'Rory again. The package of hundred-dollar bills was in Ned Beaumont's hand. He raised the hand, said, "You know where you can stick it," and threw the package of bills at O'Rory.

As Ned Beaumont's arm came down the bulldog, leaping clumsily, came up to meet it. His jaws shut over Ned Beaumont's wrist. Ned Beaumont was spun to the left by the impact and he sank on one knee with his arm down close to the floor to take the dog's weight off his arm.

Shad O'Rory rose from his chair and went to the door through which Hinkle had retreated. He opened it and said: "Come in a minute." Then he approached Ned Beaumont who, still down on one knee, was trying to let his arm yield to the strain of the dog's pulling. The dog was almost flat on the floor, all four feet braced, holding the arm.

Whisky and two other men came into the room. One of the others was the apish bow-legged man who had accompanied Shad O'Rory to the Log Cabin Club. One was a sandy-haired boy of nineteen or twenty, stocky, rosy-cheeked, and sullen. The sullen boy went around behind Ned Beaumont, between him and the door. The bow-legged ruffian put his right hand on Ned Beaumont's left arm, the arm the dog was not holding. Whisky halted half-way between Ned Beaumont and the other door.

Then O'Rory said, "Patty," to the dog.

The dog released Ned Beaumont's wrist and waddled over to its master.

Ned Beaumont stood up. His face was pallid and damp with sweat. He looked at his torn coat-sleeve and wrist and at the blood running down his hand. His hand was trembling.

O'Rory said in his musical Irish voice: "You would have it."

Ned Beaumont looked up from his wrist at the white-haired man. "Yes," he said, "and it'll take some more of it to keep me from going out of here."

### 3

Ned Beaumont opened his eyes and groaned.

The rosy-cheeked boy with sandy hair turned his head over his shoulder to growl: "Shut up, you bastard."

The apish dark man said: "Let him alone, Rusty. Maybe he'll try to get out again and we'll have some more fun." He grinned down at his swollen knuckles. "Deal the cards."

Ned Beaumont mumbled something about Fedink and sat up. He was in a narrow bed without sheets or bed-clothes of any sort. The bare mattress was blood-stained. His face was swollen and bruised and blood-smeared. Dried blood glued his shirt-sleeve to the wrist the dog had bitten and that hand was caked with drying blood. He was in a small yellow and white bedroom furnished with two chairs, a table, a chest of drawers, a wall-mirror, and three white-framed French prints, besides the bed. Facing the foot of the bed was a door that stood open to show part of the interior of a white-tiled bathroom. There was another door, shut. There were no windows.

The apish dark man and the rosy-cheeked boy with sandy hair sat on the chairs playing cards on the table. There was about twenty dollars in paper and silver on the table.

Ned Beaumont looked, with brown eyes wherein hate was a dull glow that came from far beneath the surface, at the card-players and began to get out of bed. Getting out of bed was a difficult task for him. His right arm hung useless. He had to push his legs over the side of the bed one at a time with his left hand and twice he fell over on his side and had to push himself upright again in bed with his left arm.

Once the apish man leered up at him from his cards to ask humorously: "How're you making out, brother?" Otherwise the two at the table let him alone.

He stood finally, trembling, on his feet beside the bed. Steadying himself with his left hand on the bed he reached its end. There he drew himself erect and, staring fixedly at his goal, lurched towards the closed door. Near it he stumbled and went down on his knees, but his left hand, thrown desperately out, caught the knob and he pulled himself up on his feet again.

Then the apish man laid his cards carefully down on the table and said: "Now." His grin, showing remarkably beautiful white teeth, was wide enough to show that the teeth were not natural. He went over and stood beside Ned Beaumont.

Ned Beaumont was tugging at the door-knob.

The apish man said, "Now there, Houdini," and with all his weight behind the blow drove his right fist into Ned Beaumont's face.

Ned Beaumont was driven back against the wall. The back of his head struck the wall first, then his body crashed flat against the wall, and he slid down the wall to the floor.

Rosy-cheeked Rusty, still holding his cards at the table, said gloomily, but without emotion: "Jesus, Jeff, you'll croak him."

Jeff said: "Him?" He indicated the man at his feet by kicking him not especially hard on the thigh. "You can't croak him. He's tough. He's a tough baby. He likes this." He bent down, grasped one of the unconscious man's lapels in each hand, and dragged him to his knees. "Don't you like it, baby?" he asked and, holding Ned Beaumont up on his knees with one hand, struck his face with the other fist.

The door-knob was rattled from the outside.

Jeff called: "Who's that?"

Shad O'Rory's pleasant voice: "Me."

Jeff dragged Ned Beaumont far enough from the door to let it open, dropped him there, and unlocked the door with a key taken from his pocket.

O'Rory and Whisky came in. O'Rory looked at the man on the floor, then at Jeff, and finally at Rusty. His blue-grey eyes

were clouded. When he spoke it was to ask Rusty: "Jeff been slapping him down for the fun of it?"

The rosy-cheeked boy shook his head. "This Beaumont is a son of a bitch," he said sullenly. "Every time he comes to he gets up and starts something."

"I don't want him killed, not yet," O'Rory said. He looked down at Ned Beaumont. "See if you can bring him around again. I want to talk to him."

Rusty got up from the table. "I don't know," he said. "He's pretty far gone."

Jeff was more optimistic. "Sure we can," he said. "I'll show you. Take his feet, Rusty." He put his hands under Ned Beaumont's armpits.

They carried the unconscious man into the bathroom and put him in the tub. Jeff put the stopper in and turned on cold water from both the faucet below and the shower above. "That'll have him up and singing in no time," he predicted.

Five minutes later, when they hauled him dripping from the tub and set him on his feet, Ned Beaumont could stand. They took him into the bedroom again. O'Rory was sitting on one of the chairs smoking a cigarette. Whisky had gone.

"Put him on the bed," O'Rory ordered.

Jeff and Rusty led their charge to the bed, turned him around, and pushed him down on it. When they took their hands away from him he fell straight back on the bed. They pulled him into a sitting position again and Jeff slapped his battered face with an open hand, saying: "Come on, Rip Van Winkle, come to life."

"A swell chance of him coming to life," the sullen Rusty grumbled.

"You think he won't?" Jeff asked cheerfully and slapped Ned Beaumont again.

Ned Beaumont opened the one eye not too swollen to be opened.

O'Rory said: "Beaumont."

Ned Beaumont raised his head and tried to look around the room, but there was nothing to show he could see Shad O'Rory.

O'Rory got up from his chair and stood in front of Ned Beaumont, bending down until his face was a few inches from the other man's. He asked: "Can you hear me, Beaumont?"

Ned Beaumont's open eye looked dull hate into O'Rory's eyes.

O'Rory said: "This is O'Rory, Beaumont. Can you hear what I say?"

Moving his swollen lips with difficulty, Ned Beaumont uttered a thick "Yes."

O'Rory said: "Good. Now listen to what I tell you. You're going to give me the dope on Paul." He spoke very distinctly without raising his voice, without his voice losing any of its musical quality. "Maybe you think you won't, but you will. I'll have you worked on from now till you do. Do you understand me?"

Ned Beaumont smiled. The condition of his face made the smile horrible. He said: "I won't."

O'Rory stepped back and said: "Work on him."

While Rusty hesitated, the apish Jeff knocked aside Ned Beaumont's upraised hand and pushed him down on the bed. "I got something to try." He scooped up Ned Beaumont's legs and tumbled them on the bed. He leaned over Ned Beaumont, his hands busy on Ned Beaumont's body.

Ned Beaumont's body and arms and legs jerked convulsively and three times he groaned. After that he lay still.

Jeff straightened up and took his hands away from the man on the bed. He was breathing heavily through his ape's mouth. He growled, half in complaint, half in apology: "It ain't no good now. He's throwed another joe."

4

When Ned Beaumont recovered consciousness he was alone in the room. The lights were on. As laboriously as before he got himself out of bed and across the room to the door. The door was locked. He was fumbling with the knob when the door was thrown open, pushing him back against the wall.

Jeff in his underwear, barefoot, came in. "Ain't you a pip?" he said. "Always up to some kind of tricks. Don't you never get tired of being bounced on the floor?" He took Ned Beaumont by the throat with his left hand and struck him in the face with his right fist, twice, but not so hard as he had hit him before. Then he pushed him backwards over to the bed and threw him on it. "And stay put awhile this time," he growled.

Ned Beaumont lay still with closed eyes.

Jeff went out, locking the door behind him.

Painfully Ned Beaumont climbed out of bed and made his way to the door. He tried it. Then he withdrew two steps and tried to hurl himself against it, succeeding only in lurching against it. He kept trying until the door was flung open again by Jeff.

Jeff said: "I never seen a guy that liked being hit so much or that I liked hitting so much." He leaned far over to one side and swung his fist up from below his knee.

Ned Beaumont stood blindly in the fist's path. It struck his cheek and knocked him the full length of the room. He lay still where he fell. He was lying there two hours later when Whisky came into the room.

Whisky awakened him with water from the bathroom and helped him to the bed. "Use your head," Whisky begged him. "These mugs'll kill you. They've got no sense."

Ned Beaumont looked dully at Whisky through a dull and bloody eye. "Let 'em," he managed to say.

He slept then until he was awakened by O'Rory, Jeff, and Rusty. He refused to tell O'Rory anything about Paul Madvig's affairs. He was dragged out of bed, beaten into unconsciousness, and flung into bed again.

This was repeated a few hours later. No food was brought to him.

Going on hands and knees into the bathroom when he had regained consciousness after the last of these beatings, he saw, on the floor behind the wash-stand's pedestal, a narrow safety-razor-blade red with the rust of months. Getting it out from behind the pedestal was a task that took him all of ten minutes

and his nerveless fingers failed a dozen times before they succeeded in picking it up from the tiled floor. He tried to cut his throat with it, but it fell out of his hand after he had no more than scratched his chin in three places. He lay down on the bathroom-floor and sobbed himself to sleep.

When he awakened again he could stand, and did. He doused his head in cold water and drank four glasses of water. The water made him sick and after that he began to shake with a chill. He went into the bedroom and lay down on the bare blood-stained mattress, but got up almost immediately to go stumbling and staggering in haste back to the bathroom, where he got down on hands and knees and searched the floor until he had found the rusty razor-blade. He sat on the floor and put the razor-blade into his vest-pocket. Putting it in, his fingers touched his lighter. He took the lighter out and looked at it. A cunning gleam came into his one open eye as he looked at the lighter. The gleam was not sane.

Shaking so that his teeth rattled together, he got up from the bathroom-floor and went into the bedroom again. He laughed harshly when he saw the newspaper under the table where the apish dark man and the sullen rosy-cheeked boy had played cards. Tearing and rumpling and wadding the paper in his hands, he carried it to the door and put it on the floor there. In each of the drawers in the chest of drawers he found a piece of wrapping-paper folded to cover the bottom. He rumpled them and put them with the newspaper against the door. With the razor-blade he made a long gash in the mattress, pulled out big handfuls of the coarse grey cotton with which the mattress was stuffed, and carried them to the door. He was not shaking now, nor stumbling, and he used both hands dexterously, but presently he tired of gutting the mattress and dragged what was left of it—tick and all—to the door.

He giggled then and, after the third attempt, got his lighter ignited. He set fire to the bottom of the heap against the door. At first he stood close to the heap, crouching over it, but as the smoke increased it drove him back step by step, reluctantly, coughing as he retreated. Presently he went into the bathroom,



soaked a towel with water, and wrapped it around his head, covering eyes, nose, and mouth. He came stumbling back into the bedroom, a dim figure in the smoky room, fell against the bed, and sat down on the floor beside it.

Jeff found him there when he came in.

Jeff came in cursing and coughing through the rag he held against nose and mouth. In opening the door he had pushed most of the burning heap back a little. He kicked some more out of the way and stamped through the rest to reach Ned Beaumont. He took Ned Beaumont by the back of the collar and dragged him out of the room.

Outside, still holding Ned Beaumont by the back of the collar, Jeff kicked him to his feet and ran him down to the far end of the corridor. There he pushed him through an open doorway, bawled, "I'm going to eat one of your cars when I come back, you bastard," at him, kicked him again, stepped back into the corridor, slammed the door, and turned the key in its lock.

Ned Beaumont, kicked into the room, saved himself from a fall by catching hold of a table. He pushed himself up a little nearer straight and looked around. The towel had fallen down muffler-fashion around his neck and shoulders. The room had two windows. He went to the nearer window and tried to raise it. It was locked. He unfastened the lock and raised the window. Outside was night. He put a leg over the sill, then the other, turned so that he was lying belly-down across the sill, lowered himself until he was hanging by his hands, felt with his feet for some support, found none, and let himself drop.

## V. THE HOSPITAL

### I

A nurse was doing something to Ned Beaumont's face.

"Where am I?" he asked.

"St. Luke's Hospital." She was a small nurse with very large bright hazel eyes, a breathless sort of hushed voice, and an odor of mimosa.

"What day?"

"It's Monday."

"What month and year?" he asked. When she frowned at him he said: "Oh, never mind. How long have I been here?"

"This is the third day."

"Where's the telephone?" He tried to sit up.

"Stop that," she said. "You can't use the telephone and you mustn't get yourself excited."

"You use it, then. Call Hartford six one one six and tell Mr. Madvig that I've got to see him right away."

"Mr. Madvig's here every afternoon," she said, "but I don't think Doctor Tait will let you talk to anybody yet. As a matter of fact you've done a whole lot more talking now than you ought to."

"What is it now? Morning or afternoon?"

"Morning."

"That's too long to wait," he said. "Call him now."

"Doctor Tait will be in in a little while."

"I don't want any Doctor Tait's," he said irritably. "I want Paul Madvig."

"You'll do what you're told," she replied. "You'll lie there and be quiet till Doctor Tait comes."

He scowled at her. "What a swell nurse you are. Didn't anybody ever tell you it's not good for patients to be quarreled with?"

She ignored his question.

He said: "Besides, you're hurting my jaw."

She said: "If you'd keep it still it wouldn't get hurt."

He was quiet for a moment. Then he asked: "What's supposed to have happened to me? Or didn't you get far enough in your lessons to know?"

"Probably a drunken brawl," she told him, but she could not keep her face straight after that. She laughed and said: "But honestly you shouldn't talk so much and you can't see anybody till the doctor says so."

Paul Madvig arrived early in the afternoon. "Christ, I'm glad to see you alive again!" he said. He took the invalid's unbandaged left hand in both of his.

Ned Beaumont said: "I'm all right. But here's what we've got to do: grab Walt Ivans and have him taken over to Braywood and shown to the gun-dealers there. He--"

"You told me all that," Madvig said. "That's done."

Ned Beaumont frowned. "I told you?"

"Sure--the morning you were picked up. They took you to the Emergency Hospital and you wouldn't let them do anything to you till you'd seen me and I came down there and you told me about Ivans and Braywood and passed out cold."

"It's a blank to me," Ned Beaumont said. "Did you nail them?"

"We got the Ivanses, all right, and Walt Ivans talked after he was identified in Braywood and the Grand Jury indicted Jeff Gardner and two John Does, but we're not going to be able to nail Shad on it. Gardner's the man Ivans dickered with and anybody knows he wouldn't do anything without Shad's say-so, but proving it's another thing."

"Jeff's the monkey-looking guy, huh? Has he been picked up yet?"

"No. Shad took him into hiding with him after you got away, I guess. They had you, didn't they?"

"Uh-huh. In the Dog House, upstairs. I went there to lay a trap for the gent and he out-trapped me." He scowled. "I remember going there with Whisky Vassos and being bitten by the dog and knocked around by Jeff and a blond kid. Then there was something about a fire and--that's about all. Who found me? and where?"

"A copper found you crawling on all fours up the middle of Colman Street at three in the morning leaving a trail of blood behind you."

"I think of funny things to do," Ned Beaumont said.

The small nurse with large eyes opened the door cautiously and put her head in.

Ned Beaumont addressed her in a tired voice: "All right-peckaboo! But don't you think you're a little old for that?"

The nurse opened the door wider and stood on the sill holding the edge of the door with one hand. "No wonder people beat you up," she said. "I wanted to see if you were awake. Mr. Madvig and"—the breathless quality became more pronounced in her voice and her eyes became brighter—"a lady are here."

Ned Beaumont looked at her curiously and a bit mockingly. "What kind of lady?"

"It's Miss Janet Henry," she replied in the manner of one revealing some unexpected pleasant thing.

Ned Beaumont turned on his side, his face away from the nurse. He shut his eyes. A corner of his mouth twitched, but his voice was empty of expression: "Tell them I'm still asleep."

"You can't do that," she said. "They know you're not asleep—even if they haven't heard you talking—or I'd've been back before this."

He groaned dramatically and propped himself up on his elbow. "She'd only come back again some other time," he grumbled. "I might as well get it over with."

The nurse, looking at him with contemptuous eyes, said sarcastically: "We've had to keep policemen in front of the hospital to fight off all the women that've been trying to see you."

"That's all right for you to say," he told her. "Maybe you're impressed by senators' daughters who are in the roto all the time, but you've never been hounded by them the way I have. I tell you they've made my life miserable, them and their brown roto-sections. Senators' daughters, always senators' daughters, never a representative's daughter or a cabinet minister's daughter or an alderman's daughter for the sake of variety—never anything but—Do you suppose senators are more prolific than—"

"You're not really funny," the nurse said. "It's the way you comb your hair. I'll bring them in." She left the room.

Ned Beaumont took a long breath. His eyes were shiny. He moistened his lips and then pressed them together in a tight secretive smile, but when Janet Henry came into the room his face was a mask of casual politeness.

She came straight to his bed and said: "Oh, Mr. Beaumont, I was so glad to hear that you were recovering so nicely that I simply had to come." She put a hand in his and smiled down at him. Though her eyes were not a dark brown her otherwise pure blondness made them seem dark. "So if you didn't want me to come you're not to blame Paul. I made him bring me."

Ned Beaumont smiled back at her and said: "I'm awfully glad you did. It's terribly kind of you."

Paul Madvig, following Janet Henry into the room, had gone around to the opposite side of the bed. He grinned affectionately from her to Ned Beaumont and said: "I knew you'd be, Ned. I told her so. How's it go today?"

"Nobly. Pull some chairs up."

"We can't stay," the blond man replied. "I've got to meet M'Laughlin at the Grandcourt."

"But I don't," Janet Henry said. She directed her smile at Ned Beaumont again. "Mayn't I stay—a little while?"

"I'd love that," Ned Beaumont assured her while Madvig, coming around the bed to place a chair for her, beamed delightedly upon each of them in turn and said: "That's fine." When the girl was sitting beside the bed and her black coat had been laid back over the back of the chair, Madvig looked at his watch and growled: "I've got to run." He shook Ned Beaumont's hand. "Anything I can get for you?"

"No, thanks, Paul."

"Well, be good." The blond man turned towards Janet Henry, stopped, and addressed Ned Beaumont again: "How far do you think I ought to go with M'Laughlin this first time?"

Ned Beaumont moved his shoulders a little. "As far as you want, so long as you don't put anything in plain words. They scare him. But you could hire him to commit murders if you put it to him in a long-winded way, like: 'If where was a man named Smith who lived in such and such a place and he got

sick or something and didn't get well and you happened to drop in to see me some time and just by luck an envelope addressed to you had been sent there in care of me, how would I know it had five hundred dollars in it?"

Madvig nodded. "I don't want any murders," he said, "but we do need that railroad vote." He frowned. "I wish you were up, Ned."

"I will be in a day or two. Did you see the *Observer* this morning?"

"No."

Ned Beaumont looked around the room. "Somebody's run off with it. The dirt was in an editorial in a box in the middle of the front page. *What are our city officials going to do about it?* A list of six weeks' crimes to show we're having a crime-wave. A lot smaller list of who's been caught to show the police aren't able to do much about it. Most of the squawking done about Taylor Henry's murder."

When her brother was named, Janet Henry winced and her lips parted in a little silent gasp. Madvig looked at her and then quickly at Ned Beaumont to move his head in a brief warning gesture.

Ned Beaumont, ignoring the effect of his words on the others, continued: "They were brutal about that. Accused the police of deliberately keeping their hands off the murder for a week so a gambler high in political circles could use it to square a grievance with another gambler—meaning my going after Despain to collect my money. Wondered what Senator Henry thought of his new political allies' use of his son's murder for this purpose."

Madvig, red of face, fumbling for his watch, said hastily: "I'll get a copy and read it. I've got to—"

"Also," Ned Beaumont went on serenely, "they accuse the police of raiding—after having protected them for years—those joints whose owners wouldn't come across with enormous campaign-contributions. That's what they make of your fight with Shad O'Rory. And they promise to print a list of the places that are still running because their owners did come across."

Madvig said, "Well, well," uncomfortably, said, "Good-by, have a nice visit," to Janet Henry, "See you later," to Ned Beaumont, and went out.

Janet Henry leaned forward in her chair. "Why don't you like me?" she asked Ned Beaumont.

"I think maybe I do," he said.

She shook her head. "You don't. I know it."

"You can't go by my manners," he told her. "They're always pretty bad."

"You don't like me," she insisted, not answering his smile, "and I want you to."

He was modest. "Why?"

"Because you are Paul's best friend," she replied.

"Paul," he said, looking obliquely at her, "has a lot of friends: he's a politician."

She moved her head impatiently. "You're his best friend." She paused, then added: "He thinks so."

"What do you think?" he asked with incomplete seriousness.

"I think you are," she said gravely, "or you would not be here now. You would not have gone through that for him."

His mouth twitched in a meager smile. He did not say anything.

When it became manifest that he was not going to speak she said earnestly: "I wish you would like me, if you can."

He repeated: "I think maybe I do."

She shook her head. "You don't."

He smiled at her. His smile was very young and engaging, his eyes shy, his voice youthfully diffident and confiding, as he said: "I'll tell you what makes you think that, Miss Henry. It's—you see, Paul picked me up out of the gutter, as you might say, just a year or so ago, and so I'm kind of awkward and clumsy when I'm around people like you who belong to another world altogether—society and roto-sections and all—and you mistake that—uh—*gaucherie* for enmity, which it isn't at all."

She rose and said, "You're ridiculing me," without resentment.

When she had gone Ned Beaumont lay back on his pillows

and stared at the ceiling with glittering eyes until the nurse came in.

The nurse came in and asked: "What have you been up to now?"

Ned Beaumont raised his head to look sullenly at her, but he did not speak.

The nurse said: "She went out of here as near crying as anybody could without crying."

Ned Beaumont lowered his head to the pillow again. "I must be losing my grip," he said. "I usually make senators' daughters cry."

4

A man of medium size, young and dapper, with a sleek, dark, rather good-looking face, came in.

Ned Beaumont sat up in bed and said: "Lo, Jack."

Jack said, "You don't look as bad as I thought you would," and advanced to the side of the bed.

"I'm still all in one piece. Grab a chair."

Jack sat down and took out a package of cigarettes.

Ned Beaumont said: "I've got another job for you." He put a hand under his pillows and brought out an envelope.

Jack lit his cigarette before he took the envelope from Ned Beaumont's hand. It was a plain white envelope addressed to Ned Beaumont at St. Luke's Hospital and bore the local post-mark dated two days before. Inside was a single typewritten sheet of paper which Jack took out and read.

What do you know about Paul Madvig that Shad O'Rory was so anxious to learn?

Has it anything to do with the murder of Taylor Henry?

If not, why should you have gone to such lengths to keep it secret?

Jack refolded the sheet of paper and returned it to the envelope before he raised his head. Then he asked: "Does it make sense?"



"Not that I know of. I want you to find out who wrote it."

Jack nodded. "Do I keep it?"

"Yes."

Jack put the envelope in his pocket. "Any ideas about who might have done it?"

"None at all."

Jack studied the lighted end of his cigarette. "It's a job, you know," he said presently.

"I know it," Ned Beaumont agreed, "and all I can tell you is that there's been a lot of them—or several of them—in the past week. That's my third. I know Farr got at least one. I don't know who else has been getting them."

"Can I see some of the others?"

Ned Beaumont said: "That's the only one I kept. They're all pretty much alike, though—same paper, same typewriting, three questions in each, all on the same subject."

Jack regarded Ned Beaumont with inquisitive eyes. "But not exactly the same questions?" he asked.

"Not exactly, but all getting to the same point."

Jack nodded and smoked his cigarette.

Ned Beaumont said: "You understand this is to be strictly on the qt."

"Sure." Jack took the cigarette from his mouth. "The 'same point' you mentioned is Madvig's connection with the murder?"

"Yes," Ned Beaumont replied, looking with level eyes at the sleek dark young man, "and there isn't any connection."

Jack's dark face was inscrutable. "I don't see how there could be," he said as he stood up.

§

The nurse came in carrying a large basket of fruit. "Isn't it lovely?" she said as she set it down.

Ned Beaumont nodded cautiously.

The nurse took a small stiff envelope from the basket. "I bet you it's from her," she said, giving Ned Beaumont the envelope.

"What'll you bet?"

"Anything you want."

Ned Beaumont nodded as if some dark suspicion had been confirmed. "You looked," he said.

"Why, you—" Her words stopped when he laughed, but indignation remained in her mien.

He took Janet Henry's card from the envelope. One word was written on it: *Please!* Frowning at the card, he told the nurse, "You win," and tapped the card on a thumb-nail. "Help yourself to that gunk and take enough of it so it'll look as if I'd been eating it."

Later that afternoon he wrote:

MY DEAR MISS HENRY—

You've quite overwhelmed me with your kindness—first your coming to see me, and then the fruit. I don't at all know how to thank you, but I hope I shall some day be able to more clearly show my gratitude.

Sincerely yours,

NED BEAUMONT

When he had finished he read what he had written, tore it up, and rewrote it on another sheet of paper, using the same words, but rearranging them to make the ending of the second sentence read: "be able some day to show my gratitude more clearly."

## 6

Ned Beaumont, in bathrobe and slippers this morning, was reading a copy of the *Observer* over his breakfast at a table by the window of his hospital-room when Opal Madvig came in. He folded the newspaper, put it face-down on the table beside his tray, and rose saying, "'Lo, snip," cordially. He was pale.

"Why didn't you call me up when you got back from New York?" she demanded in an accusing tone. She too was pale. Pallor accentuated the childlike texture of her skin, yet made her face seem less young. Her blue eyes were wide open and dark with emotion, but not to be read easily. She held herself

tall without stiffness, in the manner of one more sure of his balance than of stability underfoot. Ignoring the chair he moved out from the wall for her, she repeated, imperatively as before: "Why didn't you?"

He laughed at her, softly, indulgently, and said: "I like you in that shade of brown."

"Oh, Ned, please—"

"That's better," he said. "I intended coming out to the house, but—well—there were lots of things happening when I got back and a lot of loose ends of things that had happened while I was gone, and by the time I finished with those I ran into Shad O'Rory and got sent here." He waved an arm to indicate the hospital.

Her gravity was not affected by the lightness of his tone.

"Are they going to hang this Despain?" she asked curtly.

He laughed again and said: "We're not going to get very far talking like this."

She frowned, but said, "Are they, Ned?" with less haughtiness.

"I don't think so," he told her, shaking his head a little. "The chances are he didn't kill Taylor after all."

She did not seem surprised. "Did you know that when you asked me to—to help you get—or fix up—evidence against him?"

He smiled reproachfully. "Of course not, snip. What do you think I am?"

"You did know it." Her voice was cold and scornful as her blue eyes. "You only wanted to get the money he owed you and you made me help you use Taylor's murder for that."

"Have it your own way," he replied indifferently.

She came a step closer to him. The faintest of quivers disturbed her chin for an instant, then her young face was firm and bold again. "Do you know who killed him?" she asked, her eyes probing his.

He shook his head slowly from side to side.

"Did Dad?"

He blinked. "You mean did Paul know who killed him?"

She stamped a foot. "I mean did Dad kill him?" she cried.

He put a hand over her mouth. His eyes had jerked into focus on the closed door. "Shut up," he muttered.

She stepped back from his hand as one of her hands pushed it away from her face. "Did he?" she insisted.

In a low angry voice he said: "If you must be a nit-wit at least don't go around with a megaphone. Nobody cares what kind of idiotic notions you have as long as you keep them to yourself, but you've got to keep them to yourself."

Her eyes opened wide and dark. "Then he did kill him," she said in a small flat voice, but with utter certainty.

He thrust his face down towards hers. "No, my dear," he said in an enraged sugary voice, "he didn't kill him." He held his face near hers. A vicious smile distorted his features.

Firm of countenance and voice, not drawing back from him, she said: "If he didn't I can't understand what difference it makes what I say or how loud."

An end of his mouth twitched up in a sneer. "You'd be surprised how many things there are you can't understand," he said angrily, "and never will if you keep on like this." He stepped back from her, a long step, and put his fists in the pockets of his bathrobe. Both corners of his mouth were pulled down now and there were grooves in his forehead. His narrowed eyes stared at the floor in front of her feet. "Where'd you get this crazy idea?" he growled.

"It's not a crazy idea. You know it's not."

He moved his shoulders impatiently and demanded: "Where'd you get it?"

She too moved her shoulders. "I didn't get it anywhere. I—I suddenly saw it."

"Nonsense," he said sharply, looking up at her under his brows. "Did you see the *Observer* this morning?"

"No."

He stared at her with hard skeptical eyes.

Annoyance brought a little color into her face. "I did not," she said. "Why do you ask?"

"No?" he asked in a tone that said he did not believe her, but the skeptical gleam had gone out of his eyes. They were

dull and thoughtful. Suddenly they brightened. He took his right hand from his bathrobe-pocket. He held it out towards her, palm up. "Let me see the letter," he said.

She stared at him with round eyes. "What?"

"The letter," he said, "the typewritten letter—three questions and no signature."

She lowered her eyes to avoid his and embarrassment disturbed, very slightly, her features. After a moment of hesitation she asked, "How did you know?" and opened her brown hand-bag.

"Everybody in town's had at least one," he said carelessly. "Is this your first?"

"Yes." She gave him a crumpled sheet of paper.

He straightened it out and read:

Are you really too stupid to know that your father murdered your lover?

If you do not know it, why did you help him and Ned Beaumont in their attempt to fasten the crime on an innocent man?

Do you know that by helping your father escape justice you are making yourself an accomplice in his crime?

Ned Beaumont nodded and smiled lightly. "They're all pretty much alike," he said. He wadded the paper in a loose ball and tossed it at the waste-basket beside the table. "You'll probably get some more of them now you're on the mailing-list."

Opal Madvig drew her lower lip in between her teeth. Her blue eyes were bright without warmth. They studied Ned Beaumont's composed face.

He said: "O'Rory's trying to make campaign-material out of it. You know about my trouble with him. That was because he thought I'd broken with your father and could be paid to help frame him for the murder—enough at least to beat him at the polls—and I wouldn't."

Her eyes did not change. "What did you and Dad fight about?" she asked.

"That's nobody's business but ours, snip," he said gently, "if we did fight."

"You did," she said, "in Carson's speakeasy." She put her teeth together with a click and said boldly: "You quarreled when you found out that he really had—had killed Taylor."

He laughed and asked in a mocking tone: "Hadn't I known that all along?"

Her expression was not affected by his humor. "Why did you ask if I had seen the *Observer*?" she demanded. "What was in it?"

"Some more of the same sort of nonsense," he told her evenly. "It's there on the table if you want to see it. There'll be plenty of it before the campaign's over: this is going to be that kind. And you'll be giving your father a swell break by swallowing—" He broke off with an impatient gesture because she was no longer listening to him.

She had gone to the table and was picking up the newspaper he had put down when she came in.

He smiled pleasantly at her back and said: "It's on the front page, *An Open Letter to the Mayor*."

As she read she began to tremble—her knees, her hands, her mouth—so that Ned Beaumont frowned anxiously at her, but when she had finished and had dropped the newspaper on the table and had turned to face him directly her tall body and fair face were statue-like in their immobility. She addressed him in a low voice between lips that barely moved to let the words out: "They wouldn't dare say such things if they were not true."

"That's nothing to what'll be said before they're through," he drawled lazily. He seemed amused, though there was a suggestion of anger difficultly restrained in the glitter of his eyes.

She looked at him for a long moment, then, saying nothing, turned towards the door.

He said: "Wait."

She halted and confronted him again. His smile was friendly now, ingratiating. Her face was a tinted statue's.

He said: "Politics is a tough game, snip, the way it's being

played here this time. The *Observer* is on the other side of the fence and they're not worrying much about the truth of anything that'll hurt Paul. They--"

"I don't believe that," she said. "I know Mr. Mathews--his wife was only a few years ahead of me at school and we were friends--and I don't believe he'd say anything like that about Dad unless it was true, or unless he had good reason for thinking it true."

Ned Beaumont chuckled. "You know a lot about it. Mathews is up to his ears in debt. The State Central Trust Company holds both mortgages on his plant--one on his house too, for that matter. The State Central belongs to Bill Roan. Bill Roan is running for the Senate against Henry. Mathews does what he's told to do and prints what he's told to print."

Opal Madvig did not say anything. There was nothing to indicate that she had been at all convinced by Ned Beaumont's argument.

He went on, speaking in an amiable, persuasive tone: "This"--he flicked a finger at the paper on the table--"is nothing to what'll come later. They're going to rattle Taylor Henry's bones till they think up something worse and we're going to have this sort of stuff to read till election's over. We might just as well get used to it now and you, of all people, oughtn't to let yourself be bothered by it. Paul doesn't mind it much. He's a politician and--"

"He's a murderer," she said in a low distinct voice.

"And his daughter's a chump," he exclaimed irritably. "Will you stop that foolishness?"

"My father is a murderer," she said.

"You're crazy. Listen to me, snip. Your father had absolutely nothing to do with Taylor's murder. He--"

"I don't believe you," she said gravely. "I'll never believe you again."

He scowled at her.

She turned and went to the door.

"Wait," he said. "Let me--"

She went out and shut the door behind her.

Ned Beaumont's face, after a grimace of rage at the closed door, became heavily thoughtful. Lines came into his forehead. His dark eyes grew narrow and introspective. His lips puckered up under his mustache. Presently he put a finger to his mouth and bit its nail. He breathed regularly, but with more depth than usual.

Footsteps sounded outside his door. He dropped his appearance of thoughtfulness and walked idly towards the window, humming *Little Lost Lady*. The footsteps went on past his door. He stopped humming and bent to pick up the sheet of paper holding the three questions that had been addressed to Opal Madvig. He did not smooth the paper, but thrust it, crumpled in a loose ball as it was, into one of his bathrobe-pockets.

He found and lit a cigar then and, with it between his teeth burning, stood by the table and squinted down through smoke at the front page of the *Observer* lying there.

#### AN OPEN LETTER TO THE MAYOR

SIR:

The *Observer* has come into possession of certain information which it believes to be of paramount importance in clearing up the mystery surrounding the recent murder of Taylor Henry.

This information is incorporated in several affidavits now in the *Observer's* safety-deposit box. The substance of these affidavits is as follows:

1. That Paul Madvig quarreled with Taylor Henry some months ago over the young man's attentions to his daughter and forbade his daughter to see Henry again.
2. That Paul Madvig's daughter nevertheless continued to meet Taylor Henry in a furnished room he had rented for that purpose.
3. That they were together in this furnished room



the afternoon of the very day on which he was killed.

4. That Paul Madvig went to Taylor Henry's home that evening, supposedly to remonstrate with the young man, or his father, again.
5. That Paul Madvig appeared angry when he left the Henry residence a few minutes before Taylor Henry was murdered.
6. That Paul Madvig and Taylor Henry were seen within half a block of each other, less than a block from the spot where the young man's body was found, not more than fifteen minutes before his body was found.
7. That the Police Department has not at present a single detective engaged in trying to find Taylor Henry's murderer.

The *Observer* believes that you should know these things and that the voters and taxpayers should know them. The *Observer* has no ax to grind, no motive except the desire to see justice done. The *Observer* will welcome an opportunity to hand these affidavits, as well as all other information it has, to you or to any qualified city or state official and, if such a course can be shown an aid to justice, to refrain from publishing any or all of the details of these affidavits.

But the *Observer* will not permit the information incorporated in these affidavits to be ignored. If the officials elected and appointed to enforce law and order in this city and state do not consider these affidavits of sufficient importance to be acted upon, the *Observer* will carry the matter to that higher tribunal, the People of this City, by publishing them in full.

H. K. MATHEWS, Publisher

Ned Beaumont grunted derisively and blew cigar-smoke down at this declaration, but his eyes remained somber.

Early that afternoon Paul Madvig's mother came to see Ned Beaumont.

He put his arms around her and kissed her on both cheeks until she pushed him away with a mock-severe "Do stop it. You're worse than the Airedale Paul used to have."

"I'm part Airedale," he said, "on my father's side," and went behind her to help her out of her sealskin coat.

Smoothing her black dress, she went to the bed and sat on it.

He hung the coat on the back of a chair and stood—legs apart, hands in bathrobe-pockets—before her.

She studied him critically. "You don't look so bad," she said presently, "nor yet so good. How do you feel?"

"Swell. I'm only hanging around here on account of the nurses."

"That wouldn't surprise me much, neither," she told him. "But don't stand there ogling me like a Cheshire cat. You make me nervous. Sit down." She patted the bed beside her.

He sat down beside her.

She said: "Paul seems to think you did something very grand and noble by doing whatever it was you did, but you can't tell me that if you had behaved yourself you would ever have got into whatever scrape you got into at all."

"Aw, Mom," he began.

She cut him off. The gaze of her blue eyes that were young as her son's bored into Ned Beaumont's brown ones. "Look here, Ned, Paul didn't kill that whipper-snapper, did he?"

Surprise opened Ned Beaumont's eyes and mouth. "No."

"I didn't think so," the old woman said. "He's always been a good boy, but I've heard that there's some nasty hints going around and the Lord only knows what goes on in this politics. I'm sure I haven't any idea."

Amazement tinged with humor was in the eyes with which Ned Beaumont looked at her bony face.

She said: "Well, goggle at me, but I haven't got any way of

knowing what you men are up to, or what you do without thinking anything of it. It was a long while before ever you were born that I gave up trying to find out."

He patted her shoulder. "You're a humdinger, Mom," he said admiringly.

She drew away from his hand and fixed him with severe penetrant eyes again. "Would you tell me if he had killed him?" she demanded.

He shook his head no.

"Then how do I know he didn't?"

He laughed. "Because," he explained, "if he had I'd still say, 'No,' but then, if you asked me if I'd tell you the truth if he had, I'd say, 'Yes.' " Merriment went out of his eyes and voice. "He didn't do it, Mom." He smiled at her. He smiled with his lips only and they were thin against his teeth. "It would be nice if somebody in town besides me thought he didn't do it and it would be especially nice if that other one was his mother."

## 9

An hour after Mrs. Madvig's departure Ned Beaumont received a package containing four books and Janet Henry's card. He was writing her a note of thanks when Jack arrived.

Jack, letting cigarette-smoke come out with his words, said: "I think I've got something, though I don't know how you're going to like it."

Ned Beaumont looked thoughtfully at the sleek young man and smoothed the left side of his mustache with a forefinger. "If it's what I hired you to get I'll like it well enough." His voice was matter-of-fact as Jack's. "Sit down and tell me about it."

Jack sat down carefully, crossed his legs, put his hat on the floor, and looked from his cigarette to Ned Beaumont. He said: "It looks like those things were written by Madvig's daughter."

Ned Beaumont's eyes widened a little, but only for a moment. His face lost some of its color and his breathing became irregular. There was no change in his voice. "What makes it look like that?"

From an inner pocket Jack brought two sheets of paper similar in size and make, folded alike. He gave them to Ned Beaumont who, when he had unfolded them, saw that on each were three typewritten questions, the same three questions on each sheet.

"One of them's the one you gave me yesterday," Jack said. "Could you tell which?"

Ned Beaumont shook his head slowly from side to side.

"There's no difference," Jack said. "I wrote the other one on Charter Street where Taylor Henry had a room that Madvig's daughter used to come to—with a Corona typewriter that was there and on paper that was there. So far as anybody seems to know there were only two keys to the place. He had one and she had one. She's been back there at least a couple of times since he was killed."

Ned Beaumont, scowling now at the sheets of paper in his hands, nodded without looking up.

Jack lit a fresh cigarette from the one he had been smoking, rose and went to the table to mash the old cigarette in the ash-tray there, and returned to his seat. There was nothing in his face or manner to show that he had any interest in Ned Beaumont's reaction to their discovery.

After another minute of silence Ned Beaumont raised his head a little and asked: "How'd you get this?"

Jack put his cigarette in a corner of his mouth where it wagged with his words. "The *Observer* tip on the place this morning gave me the lead. That's where the police got theirs too, but they got there first. I got a pretty good break, though: the copper left in charge was a friend of mine—Fred Hurley—and for a ten-spot he let me do all the poking around I wanted."

Ned Beaumont rattled the papers in his hand. "Do the police know this?" he asked.

Jack shrugged. "I didn't tell them. I pumped Hurley, but he didn't know anything—just put there to watch things till they decide what they're going to do. Maybe they know, maybe they don't." He shook cigarette-ash on the floor. "I could find out."

"Never mind that. What else did you turn up?"

**"I didn't look for anything else."**

Ned Beaumont, after a quick glance at the dark young man's inscrutable face, looked down at the sheets of paper again. "What kind of dump is it?"

"Thirteen twenty-four. They had a room and bath under the name of French. The woman that runs the place claims she didn't know who they really were till the police came today. Maybe she didn't. It's the kind of joint where not much is asked. She says they used to be there a lot, mostly in the afternoons, and that the girl's been back a couple of times in the last week or so that she knows of, though she could pop in and out without being seen easily enough."

**"Sure it's her?"**

Jack made a noncommittal gesture with one hand. "The description's right." He paused, then added carelessly as he exhaled smoke: "She's the only one the woman saw since he was killed."

Ned Beaumont raised his head again. His eyes were hard. "Taylor had others coming there?" he asked.

Jack made the noncommittal gesture once more. "The woman wouldn't say so. She said she didn't know, but from the way she said it I'd say it was a safe bet she was lying."

**"Couldn't tell by what's in the place?"**

Jack shook his head. "No. There's not much woman stuff there—just a kimono and toilet things and pajamas and stuff like that."

**"Much of his stuff there?"**

"Oh, a suit and a pair of shoes and some underwear and pajamas and socks and so on."

**"Any hats?"**

Jack smiled. "No hats," he said.

Ned Beaumont got up and went to the window. Outside darkness was almost complete. A dozen raindrops clung to the glass and as many more struck it lightly while Ned Beaumont stood there. He turned to face Jack again. "Thanks a lot, Jack," he said slowly. His eyes were focused on Jack's face in a dully absent-minded stare. "I think maybe I'll have

another job for you soon—maybe tonight. I'll give you a ring."

Jack said, "Right," and rose and went out.

Ned Beaumont went to the closet for his clothes, carried them into the bathroom, and put them on. When he came out a nurse was in his room, a tall full-bodied woman with a shiny pale face.

"Why, you're dressed!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, I've got to go out."

Alarm joined astonishment in her mien. "But you can't, Mr. Beaumont," she protested. "It's night and it's beginning to rain and Doctor Tait would—"

"I know, I know," he said impatiently, and went around her to the door.

## VI. THE OBSERVER

### I

Mrs. Madvig opened her front door. "Ned!" she cried, "are you crazy? Running around on a night like this, and you just out of the hospital."

"The taxi didn't leak," he said, but his grin lacked virility. "Paul in?"

"He went out not more than half an hour ago, I think to the Club. But come in, come in."

"Opal home?" he asked as he shut the door and followed her down the hall.

"No. She's been off somewhere since morning."

Ned Beaumont halted in the living-room doorway. "I can't stay," he said. "I'll run on down to the Club and see Paul there." His voice was not quite steady.

The old woman turned quickly towards him. "You'll do no such thing," she said in a scolding voice. "Look at you, you're just about to have a chill. You'll sit right down there by the fire and let me get you something hot to drink."

"Can't, Mom," he told her. "I've got to go places."

Her blue eyes wherein age did not show became bright and keen. "When did you leave the hospital?" she demanded.

"Just now."

She put her lips together hard, then opened them a little to say accusingly: "You walked out." A shadow disturbed the clear blueness of her eyes. She came close to Ned Beaumont and held her face close to his: she was nearly as tall as he. Her voice was harsh now as if coming from a parched throat. "Is it something about Paul?" The shadow in her eyes became recognizable as fear. "And Opal?"

His voice was barely audible. "It's something I've got to see them about."

She touched one of his cheeks somewhat timidly with bony fingers. "You're a good boy, Ned," she said.

He put an arm around her. "Don't worry, Mom. None of it's bad as it could be. Only-if Opal comes home make her stay-if you can."

"Is it anything you can tell me, Ned?" she asked.

"Not now and-well-it might be just as well not to let either of them know you think anything's wrong."

2

Ned Beaumont walked five blocks through the rain to a drug-store. He used a telephone there first to order a taxicab and then to call two numbers and ask for Mr. Mathews. He did not get Mr. Mathews on the wire.

He called another number and asked for Mr. Rumsen. A moment later he was saying: "Lo, Jack, this is Ned Beaumont. Busy? . . . Fine. Here it is. I want to know if the girl we were talking about went to see Mathews of the *Observer* today and what she did afterwards, if she did. . . . That's right, Hal Mathews. I tried to get him by phone, there and home, but no luck. . . . Well, on the quiet if you can, but get it and get it quick. . . . No, I'm out of the hospital. I'll be home waiting. You know my number. . . . Yes, Jack. Fine, thanks, and ring me as often as you can. . . . 'By."

He went out to the waiting taxicab, got into it, and gave the driver his address, but after half a dozen blocks he tapped the front window with his fingers and gave the driver another address.

Presently the taxicab came to rest in front of a squat greyish house set in the center of a steeply sloping smooth lawn. "Wait," he told the driver as he got out.

The greyish house's front door was opened to his ring by a red-haired maid.

"Mr. Farr in?" he asked her.

"I'll see. Who shall I tell him?"

"Mr. Beaumont."

The District Attorney came into the reception-hall with both hands out. His florid pugnacious face was all smiling. "Well, well, Beaumont, this is a real pleasure," he said as he rushed up to his visitor. "Here, give me your coat and hat."

Ned Beaumont smiled and shook his head. "I can't stay," he said. "I just dropped in for a second on my way home from the hospital."

"All shipshape again? Splendid!"

"Feeling pretty good," Ned Beaumont said. "Anything new?"

"Nothing very important. The birds who manhandled you are still loose—in hiding somewhere—but we'll get them."

Ned Beaumont made a depreciatory mouth. "I didn't die and they weren't trying to kill me: you could only stick them with an assault-charge." He looked somewhat drowsily at Farr. "Had any more of those three-question epistles?"

The District Attorney cleared his throat. "Uh—yes, come to think of it, there were one or two more of them."

"How many?" Ned Beaumont asked. His voice was politely casual. The ends of his lips were raised a little in an idle smile. Amusement glinted in his eyes, but his eyes held Farr's.

The District Attorney cleared his throat. "Three," he said reluctantly. Then his eyes brightened. "Did you hear about the splendid meeting we had at—?"

Ned Beaumont interrupted him. "All along the same line?" he asked.



"Uh—more or less." The District Attorney licked his lips and a pleading expression began to enter his eyes.

"How much more—or less?"

Farr's eyes slid their gaze down from Ned Beaumont's eyes to his necktie and sidewise to his left shoulder. He moved his lips vaguely, but did not utter a sound.

Ned Beaumont's smile was openly malicious now. "All saying Paul killed Taylor Henry?" he asked in a sugary voice.

Farr jumped, his face faded to a light orange, and in his excitement he let his startled eyes focus on Ned Beaumont's eyes again. "Christ, Ned!" he gasped.

Ned Beaumont laughed. "You're getting nerves, Farr," he said, still sugary of voice. "Better watch yourself or you'll be going to pieces." He made his face grave. "Has Paul said anything to you about it? About your nerves, I mean."

"N-no."

Ned Beaumont smiled again. "Maybe he hasn't noticed it—yet." He raised an arm, glanced at his wrist-watch, then at Farr. "Found out who wrote them yet?" he asked sharply.

The District Attorney stammered: "Look here, Ned, I don't—you know—it's not—" floundered and stopped.

Ned Beaumont asked: "Well?"

The District Attorney gulped and said desperately: "We've got something, Ned, but it's too soon to say. Maybe there's nothing to it. You know how these things are."

Ned Beaumont nodded. There was nothing but friendliness in his face now. His voice was level and cool without chilliness saying: "You've learned where they were written and you've found the machine they were written on, but that's all you've got so far. You haven't got enough to even guess who wrote them."

"That's right, Ned," Farr blurted out with a great air of relief.

Ned Beaumont took Farr's hand and shook it cordially. "That's the stuff," he said. "Well, I've got to run along. You can't go wrong taking things slowly, being sure you're right before you go ahead. You can take my word for that."

The District Attorney's face and voice were warm with emotion. "Thanks, Ned, thanks!"

3

At ten minutes past nine o'clock that evening the telephone-bell in Ned Beaumont's living-room rang. He went quickly to the telephone. "Hello. . . . Yes, Jack. . . . Yes. . . . Yes. . . . Where? . . . Yes, that's fine. . . . That'll be all tonight. Thanks a lot."

When he rose from the telephone he was smiling with pale lips. His eyes were shiny and reckless. His hands shook a little.

The telephone-bell rang again before he had taken his third step. He hesitated, went back to the telephone. "Hello. . . . Oh, hello, Paul. . . . Yes, I got tired of playing invalid. . . . Nothing special—just thought I'd drop in and see you. . . . No, I'm afraid I can't. I'm not feeling as strong as I thought I was, so I think I'd better go to bed. . . . Yes, tomorrow, sure. . . . 'By."

He put on rain-coat and hat going downstairs. Wind drove rain in at him when he opened the street-door, drove it into his face as he walked half a block to the garage on the corner.

In the garage's glass-walled office a lanky brown-haired man in once-white overalls was tilted back on a wooden chair, his feet on a shelf above an electric heater, reading a newspaper. He lowered the newspaper when Ned Beaumont said: "Lo, Tommy."

The dirtiness of Tommy's face made his teeth seem whiter than they were. He showed many of them in a grin and said: "Kind of weatherish tonight."

"Yes. Got an iron I can have? One that'll carry me over country roads tonight?"

Tommy said: "Jesus! Lucky for you you could pick your night. You might've had to go on a bad one. Well, I got a Buick that I don't care what happens to."

"Will it get me there?"

"It's just as likely to as anything else," Tommy said, "to-night."

"All right. Fill it up for me. What's the best road up Lazy Creek way on a night like this?"

"How far up?"

Ned Beaumont looked thoughtfully at the garageman, then said: "Along about where it runs into the river."

Tommy nodded. "The Mathews place?" he asked.

Ned Beaumont did not say anything.

Tommy said: "It makes a difference which place you're going to."

"Yes? The Mathews place." Ned Beaumont frowned. "This is under the hat, Tommy."

"Did you come to me because you thought I'd talk or because you knew I wouldn't?" Tommy demanded argumentatively.

Ned Beaumont said: "I'm in a hurry."

"Then you take the New River Road as far as Barton's, take the dirt road over the bridge there—if you can make it at all—and then the first cross-road back east. That'll bring you in behind Mathews's place along about the top of the hill. If you can't make the dirt road in this weather you'll have to go on up the New River Road to where it crosses and then cut back along the old one."

"Thanks."

When Ned Beaumont was getting into the Buick Tommy said to him in a markedly casual tone: "There's an extra gun in the side-pocket."

Ned Beaumont stared at the lanky man. "Extra?" he asked blankly.

"Pleasant trip," Tommy said.

Ned Beaumont shut the door and drove away.

#### 4

The clock in the dashboard said ten-thirty-two. Ned Beaumont switched off the lights and got somewhat stiffly out of the Buick. Wind-driven rain hammered tree, bush, ground, man, car with incessant wet blows. Downhill, through rain and foliage, irregular small patches of yellow light glowed faintly. Ned Beaumont shivered, tried to draw his rain-coat closer around him, and began to stumble downhill through drenched underbrush towards the patches of light.

Wind and rain on his back pushed him downhill towards the

patches. As he went downhill stiffness gradually left him so that, though he stumbled often and staggered, and was tripped by obstacles underfoot, he kept his feet under him and moved nimbly enough, if erratically, towards his goal.

Presently a path came under his feet. He turned into it, holding it partly by its sliminess under his feet, partly by the feel of the bushes whipping his face on either side, and not at all by sight. The path led him off to the left for a little distance, but then, swinging in a broad curve, brought him to the brink of a small gorge through which water rushed noisily and from there, in another curve, to the front door of the building where the yellow light glowed.

Ned Beaumont went straight up to the door and knocked.

The door was opened by a grey-haired bespectacled man. His face was mild and greyish and the eyes that peered anxiously through the pale-tortoise-shell-encircled lenses of his spectacles were grey. His brown suit was neat and of good quality, but not fashionably cut. One side of his rather high stiff white collar had been blistered in four places by drops of water. He stood aside holding the door open and said, "Come in, sir, come in out of the rain," in a friendly if not hearty voice. "A wretched night to be out in."

Ned Beaumont lowered his head no more than two inches in the beginning of a bow and stepped indoors. He was in a large room that occupied all the building's ground-floor. The sparseness and simplicity of the room's furnishings gave it a primitive air that was pleasantly devoid of ostentation. It was a kitchen, a dining-room, and a living-room.

Opal Madvig rose from the footstool on which she had been sitting at one end of the fireplace and, holding herself tall and straight, stared with hostile bleak eyes at Ned Beaumont.

He took off his hat and began to unbutton his rain-coat. The others recognized him then.

The man who had opened the door said, "Why, it's Beaumont!" in an incredulous voice and looked wide-eyed at Shad O'Rory.

Shad O'Rory was sitting in a wooden chair in the center of

the room facing the fireplace. He smiled dreamily at Ned Beaumont, saying, in his musical faintly Irish barytone, "And so it is," and, "How are you, Ned?"

Jeff Gardner's apish face broadened in a grin that showed his beautiful false teeth and almost completely hid his little red eyes. "By Jesus, Rusty!" he said to the sullen rosy-cheeked boy who lounged on the bench beside him, "little Rubber Ball has come back to us. I told you he liked the way we bounced him around."

Rusty lowered at Ned Beaumont and growled something that did nor carry across the room.

The thin girl in red sitting not far from Opal Madvig looked at Ned Beaumont with bright interested dark eyes.

Ned Beaumont took off his coat. His lean face, still bearing the marks of Jeff's and Rusty's fists, was tranquil except for the recklessness aglitter in his eyes. He put his coat and hat on a long unpainted chest that was against one wall near the door. He smiled politely at the man who had admitted him and said: "My car broke down as I was passing. It's very kind of you to give me shelter, Mr. Mathews."

Mathews said, "Not at all—glad to," somewhat vaguely. Then his frightened eyes looked pleadingly at O'Rory again.

O'Rory stroked his smooth white hair with a slender pale hand and smiled pleasantly at Ned Beaumont, but did not say anything.

Ned Beaumont advanced to the fireplace. "Lo, snip," he said to Opal Madvig.

She did not respond to his greeting. She stood there and looked at him with hostile bleak eyes.

He directed his smile at the thin girl in red. "This is Mrs. Mathews, isn't it?"

She said, "It is," in a soft, almost cooing, voice and held out her hand.

"Opal told me you were a schoolmate of hers," he said as he took her hand. He turned from her to face Rusty and Jeff.

"Lo, boys," he said carelessly. "I was hoping I'd see you some time soon."

Rusty said nothing.

Jeff's face became an ugly mask of grinning delight. "Me and you both," he said heartily, "now that my knuckles are all healed up again. What do you guess it is that makes me get such a hell of a big kick out of slugging you?"

Shad O'Rory gently addressed the apish man without turning to look at him: "You talk too much with your mouth, Jeff. Maybe if you didn't you'd still have your own teeth."

Mrs. Mathews spoke to Opal in an undertone. Opal shook her head and sat down on the stool by the fire again.

Mathews, indicating a wooden chair at the other end of the fireplace, said nervously: "Sit down, Mr. Beaumont, and dry your feet and—and get warm."

"Thanks." Ned Beaumont pulled the chair out more directly in the fire's glow and sat down.

Shad O'Rory was lighting a cigarette. When he had finished he took it from between his lips and asked: "How are you feeling, Ned?"

"Pretty good, Shad."

"That's fine." O'Rory turned his head a little to speak to the two men on the bench: "You boys can go back to town tomorrow." He turned back to Ned Beaumont, explaining blandly: "We were playing safe as long as we didn't know for sure you weren't going to die, but we don't mind standing an assault-rap."

Ned Beaumont nodded. "The chances are I won't go to the trouble of appearing against you, anyhow, on that, but don't forget our friend Jeff's wanted for West's murder." His voice was light, but into his eyes, fixed on the log burning in the fireplace, came a brief evil glint. There was nothing in his eyes but mockery when he moved them to the left to focus on Mathews. "Though of course I might so I could make trouble for Mathews for helping you hide out."

Mathews said hastily: "I didn't, Mr. Beaumont. I didn't even know they were here until we came up today and I was as surprised as—" He broke off, his face panicky, and addressed Shad O'Rory. whining: "You know you are welcome. You know that,

but the point I'm trying to make"—his face was illuminated by a sudden glad smile—"is that by helping you without knowing it I didn't do anything I could be held legally responsible for."

O'Rory said softly: "Yes, you helped me without knowing it." His notable clear blue-grey eyes looked without interest at the newspaper-publisher.

Mathews's smile lost its gladness, flickered out entirely. He fidgeted with fingers at his necktie and presently evaded O'Rory's gaze.

Mrs. Mathews spoke to Ned Beaumont, sweetly: "Everybody's been so dull this evening. It was simply ghastly until you came."

He looked at her curiously. Her dark eyes were bright, soft, inviting. Under his appraising look she lowered her head a little and pursed her lips a little, coquettishly. Her lips were thin, too dark with rouge, but beautiful in form. He smiled at her and, rising, went over to her.

Opal Madvig stared at the floor before her. Mathews, O'Rory, and the two men on the bench watched Ned Beaumont and Mathews's wife.

He asked, "What makes them so dull?" and sat down on the floor in front of her, cross-legged, not facing her directly, his back to the fire, leaning on a hand on the floor behind him, his face turned up to one side towards her.

"I'm sure I don't know," she said, pouting. "I thought it was going to be fun when Hal asked me if I wanted to come up here with him and Opal. And then, when we got here, we found these—" she paused a moment—said, "friends of Hal's," with poorly concealed dubiety—and went on: "here and everybody's been sitting around hinting at some secret they've all got between them that I don't know anything about and it's been unbearably stupid. Opal's been as bad as the rest. She—"

Her husband said, "Now, Eloise," in an ineffectually authoritative tone and, when she raised her eyes to meet his, got more embarrassment than authority in his gaze.

"I don't care," she told him petulantly. "It's true and Opal is as bad as the rest of you. Why, you and she haven't even

talked about whatever business it was you were coming up here to discuss in the first place. Don't think I'd've stayed here this long if it hadn't been for the storm. I wouldn't."

Opal Madvig's face had flushed, but she did not raise her eyes.

Eloise Mathews bent her head down towards Ned Beaumont again and the petulance in her face became playful. "That's what you've got to make up for," she assured him, "and that and not because you're beautiful is why I was so glad to see you."

He frowned at her in mock indignation.

She frowned at him. Her frown was genuine. "Did your car really break down?" she demanded. "or did you come here to see them on the same dull business that's making them so stupidly mysterious? You did. You're another one of them."

He laughed. He asked: "It wouldn't make any difference why I came if I changed my mind after seeing you. would it?"

"No-o-o"—she was suspicious—"but I'd have to be awfully sure you had changed it."

"And anyway," he promised lightly, "I won't be mysterious about anything. Haven't you really got an idea of what they're all eating their hearts out about?"

"Not the least," she replied spitefully, "except that I'm pretty sure it must be something very stupid and probably political."

He put his free hand up and patted one of hers. "Smart girl, right on both counts." He turned his head to look at O'Rory and Mathews. When his eyes came back to hers they were shiny with merriment. "Want me to tell you about it?"

"No."

"First," he said, "Opal thinks her father murdered Taylor Henry."

Opal Madvig made a horrible strangling noise in her throat and sprang up from the footstool. She put the back of one hand over her mouth. Her eyes were open so wide the whites showed all around the irises and they were glassy and dreadful.

Rusty lurched to his feet, his face florid with anger, but Jeff, leering, caught the boy's arm. "Let him alone," he rasped good-



naturedly. "He's all right." The boy stood straining against the apish man's grip on his arm, but did not try to free himself.

Eloise Mathews sat frozen in her chair, staring without comprehension at Opal.

Mathews was trembling, a shrunken grey-faced sick man whose lower lip and lower eyelids sagged.

Shad O'Rory was sitting forward in his chair, finely modeled long face pale and hard, eyes like blue-grey ice, hands gripping chair-arms, feet flat on the floor.

"Second," Ned Beaumont said, his poise nowise disturbed by the agitation of the others, "she—"

"Ned, don't!" Opal Madvig cried.

He screwed himself around on the floor then to look up at her.

She had taken her hand from her mouth. Her hands were knotted together against her chest. Her stricken eyes, her whole haggard face, begged mercy of him.

He studied her gravely awhile. Through window and wall came the sound of rain dashing against the building in wild gusts and between gusts the bustling of the near-by river. His eyes, studying her, were cool, deliberate. Presently he spoke to her in a voice kind enough but aloof: "Isn't that why you're here?"

"Please don't," she said hoarsely.

He moved his lips in a thin smile that his eyes had nothing to do with and asked: "Nobody's supposed to go around talking about it except you and your father's other enemies?"

She put her hands—fists—down at her sides, raised her face angrily, and said in a hard ringing voice: "He did murder Taylor."

Ned Beaumont leaned back against his hand again and looked up at Eloise Mathews. "That's what I was telling you," he drawled. "Thinking that, she went to your husband after she saw the junk he printed this morning. Of course he didn't think Paul had done any killing: he's just in a tough spot—with his mortgages held by the State Central, which is owned by Shad's candidate for the Senate—and he has to do what he's told. What she—"

Mathews interrupted him. The publisher's voice was thin and desperate. "Now you stop that, Beaumont. You—"

O'Rory interrupted Mathews. O'Rory's voice was quiet, musical. "Let him talk, Mathews," he said. "Let him say his say."

"Thanks, Shad," Ned Beaumont said carelessly, not looking around, and went on: "She went to your husband to have him confirm her suspicion, but he couldn't give her anything that would do that unless he lied to her. He doesn't know anything. He's simply throwing mud wherever Shad tells him to throw it. But here's what he can do and does. He can print in tomorrow's paper the story about her coming in and telling him she believes her father killed her lover. That'll be a lovely wallop. 'Opal Madvig Accuses Father of Murder; Boss's Daughter Says He Killed Senator's Son!' Can't you see that in black ink all across the front of the *Observer*?"

Eloise Mathews, her eyes large, her face white, was listening breathlessly, bending forward, her face above his. Wind-flung rain beat walls and windows. Rusty filled and emptied his lungs with a long sighing breath.

Ned Beaumont put the tip of his tongue between smiling lips, withdrew it, and said: "That's why he brought her up here, to keep her under cover till the story breaks. Maybe he knew Shad and the boys were here, maybe not. It doesn't make any difference. He's getting her off where nobody can find out what she's done till the papers are out. I don't mean that he'd've brought her here, or would hold her here, against her will—that wouldn't be very bright of him the way things stack up now—but none of that's necessary. She's willing to go to any lengths to ruin her father."

Opal Madvig said, in a whisper, but distinctly: "He did kill him."

Ned Beaumont sat up straight and looked at her. He looked solemnly at her for a moment, then smiled, shook his head in a gesture of amused resignation, and leaned back on his elbows.

Eloise Mathews was staring with dark eyes wherein wonder was predominant at her husband. He had sat down. His head was bowed. His hands hid his face.

Shad O'Rory recrossed his legs and took out a cigarette. "Through?" he asked mildly.

Ned Beaumont's back was to O'Rory. He did not turn to reply: "You'd hardly believe how through I am." His voice was level, but his face was suddenly tired, spent.

O'Rory lit his cigarette. "Well," he said when he had done that, "what the hell does it all amount to? It's our turn to hang a big one on you and we're doing it. The girl came in with the story on her own hook. She came here because she wanted to. So did you. She and you and anybody else can go wherever they want to go whenever they want to." He stood up. "Personally, I'm wanting to go to bed. Where do I sleep, Mathews?"

Eloise Mathews spoke, to her husband: "This is not true, Hal." It was not a question.

He was slow taking his hand from his face. He achieved dignity saying: "Darling, there is a dozen times enough evidence against Madvig to justify us in insisting that the police at least question him. That is all we have done."

"I did not mean that," his wife said.

"Well, darling, when Miss Madvig came—" He faltered, stopped, a grey-faced man who shivered before the look in his wife's eyes and put his hands over his face again.

5

Eloise Mathews and Ned Beaumont were alone in the large ground-floor room, sitting, in chairs a few feet apart, with the fireplace in front of them. She was bent forward, looking with tragic eyes at the last burning log. His legs were crossed. One of his arms was hooked over the back of his chair. He smoked a cigar and watched her surreptitiously.

The stairs creaked and her husband came half-way down them. He was fully clothed except that he had taken off his collar. His necktie, partially loosened, hung outside his vest. He said: "Darling, won't you come to bed? It's midnight."

She did not move.

He said: "Mr. Beaumont, will you—?"

Ned Beaumont, when his name was spoken, turned his face towards the man on the stairs, a face cruelly placid. When Mathews's voice broke, Ned Beaumont returned his attention to his cigar and Mathews's wife.

After a little while Mathews went upstairs again.

Eloise Mathews spoke without taking her gaze from the fire. "There is some whisky in the chest. Will you get it?"

"Surely." He found the whisky and brought it to her, then found some glasses. "Straight?" he asked.

She nodded. Her round breasts were moving the red silk of her dress irregularly with her breathing.

He poured two large drinks.

She did not look up from the fire until he had put one glass in her hand. When she looked up she smiled, crookedly, twisting her heavily rouged exquisite thin lips sidewise. Her eyes, reflecting red light from the fire, were too bright.

He smiled down at her.

She lifted her glass and said, cooing: "To my husband!"

Ned Beaumont said, "No," casually and tossed the contents of his glass into the fireplace, where it spluttered and threw dancing flames up.

She laughed in delight and jumped to her feet. "Pour another," she ordered.

He picked the bottle up from the floor and refilled his glass.

She lifted hers high over her head. "To you!"

They drank. She shuddered.

"Better take something with it or after it," he suggested.

She shook her head. "I want it that way." She put a hand on his arm and turned her back to the fire, standing close beside him. "Let's bring that bench over here."

"That's an idea," he agreed.

They moved the chairs from in front of the fireplace and brought the bench there, he carrying one end, she the other. The bench was broad, low, backless.

"Now turn off the lights," she said.

He did so. When he returned to the bench she was sitting on it pouring whisky into their glasses.

"To you, this time," he said and they drank and she shuddered.

He sat beside her. They were rosy in the glow from the fireplace.

The stairs creaked and her husband came down them. He halted on the bottom step and said: "Please, darling!"

She whispered in Ned Beaumont's ear, savagely: "Throw something at him."

Ned Beaumont chuckled.

She picked up the whisky-bottle and said: "Where's your glass?"

While she was filling their glasses Mathews went upstairs.

She gave Ned Beaumont his glass and touched it with her own. Her eyes were wild in the red glow. A lock of dark hair had come loose and was down across her brow. She breathed through her mouth, panting softly. "To us!" she said.

They drank. She let her empty glass fall and came into his arms. Her mouth was to his when she shuddered. The fallen glass broke noisily on the wooden floor. Ned Beaumont's eyes were narrow, crafty. Hers were shut tight.

They had not moved when the stairs creaked. Ned Beaumont did not move then. She tightened her thin arms around him. He could not see the stairs. Both of them were breathing heavily now.

Then the stairs creaked again and, shortly afterwards, they drew their heads apart, though they kept their arms about one another. Ned Beaumont looked at the stairs. Nobody was there.

Eloise Mathews slid her hand up the back of his head, running her fingers through his hair, digging her nails into his scalp. Her eyes were not now altogether closed. They were laughing dark slits. "Life's like that," she said in a small bitter mocking voice, leaning back on the bench, drawing him with her, drawing his mouth to hers.

They were in that position when they heard the shot.

Ned Beaumont was out of her arms and on his feet immediately. "His room?" he asked sharply.

She blinked at him in dumb terror.

"His room?" he repeated.

She moved a feeble hand. "In front," she said thickly.

He ran to the stairs and went up in long leaps. At the head of the stairs he came face to face with the apish Jeff, dressed except for his shoes, blinking sleep out of his swollen eyes. Jeff put a hand to his hip, put the other hand out to stop Ned Beaumont, and growled: "Now what's all this?"

Ned avoided the outstretched hand, slid past it, and drove his left fist into the apish muzzle. Jeff staggered back snarling. Ned Beaumont sprang past him and ran towards the front of the building. O'Rory came out of another room and ran behind him.

From downstairs came Mrs. Mathews's scream.

Ned Beaumont flung a door open and stopped. Mathews lay on his back on the bedroom-floor under a lamp. His mouth was open and a little blood had trickled from it. One of his arms was thrown out across the floor. The other lay on his chest. Over against the wall, where the outstretched arm seemed to be pointing at it, was a dark revolver. On a table by the window was a bottle of ink—its stopper upside down beside it—a pen, and a sheet of paper. A chair stood close to the table, facing it.

Shad O'Rory pushed past Ned Beaumont and knelt beside the man on the floor. While he was there Ned Beaumont, behind him, swiftly glanced at the paper on the table, then thrust it into his pocket.

Jeff came in, followed by Rusty, naked.

O'Rory stood up and spread his hands apart in a little gesture of finality. "Shot himself through the roof of the mouth," he said. "Finis."

Ned Beaumont turned and went out of the room. In the hall he met Opal Madvig.

"What, Ned?" she asked in a frightened voice.

"Mathews has shot himself. I'll go down and stay with her till you get some clothes on. Don't go in there. There's nothing to see." He went downstairs.

Eloise Mathews was a dim shape lying on the floor beside the bench.

He took two quick steps towards her, halted, and looked around the room with shrewd cold eyes. Then he walked over to the woman, went down on a knee beside her, and felt her pulse. He looked at her as closely as he could in the dull light of the dying fire. She gave no sign of consciousness. He pulled the paper he had taken from her husband's table out of his pocket and moved on his knees to the fireplace, where, in the red embers' glow, he read:

I, Howard Keith Mathews, being of sound mind and memory, declare this to be my last will and testament:

I give and bequeath to my beloved wife, Eloise Braden Mathews, her heirs and assigns, all my real and personal property, of whatever nature or kind.

I hereby appoint the State Central Trust Company the sole executor of this will.

In witness whereof I have hereunto subscribed my name this. . .

Ned Beaumont, smiling grimly, stopped reading and tore the will three times across. He stood up, reached over the fire-screen, and dropped the torn pieces of paper into the glowing embers. The fragments blazed brightly a moment and were gone. With the wrought-iron shovel that stood beside the fire he mashed the paper-ash into the wood-coals.

Then he returned to Mrs. Mathews's side, poured a little whisky into the glass he had drunk from, raised her head, and forced some of the liquor between her lips. She was partly awake, coughing, when Opal Madvig came downstairs.

## 6

Shad O'Rory came down the stairs. Jeff and Rusty were behind him. All of them were dressed. Ned Beaumont was standing by the door, in raincoat and hat.

"Where are you going, Ned?" Shad asked.

**"To find a phone."**

O'Rory nodded. "That's a good enough idea," he said, "but there's something I want to ask you about." He came the rest of the way down the stairs, his follower close behind him.

Ned Beaumont said: "Yes?" He took his hand out of his pocket. The hand was visible to O'Rory and the men behind him, but Ned Beaumont's body concealed it from the bench where Opal sat with arms around Eloise Mathews. A square pistol was in the hand. "Just so there won't be any foolishness. I'm in a hurry."

O'Rory did not seem to see the pistol, though he came no nearer. He said, reflectively: "I was thinking that with an open ink-bottle and a pen on the table and a chair up to it it's kind of funny we didn't find any writing up there."

Ned Beaumont smiled in mock astonishment. "What, no writing?" He took a step backwards, towards the door. "That's a funny one, all right. I'll discuss it with you for hours when I come back from phoning."

**"Now would be better," O'Rory said.**

"Sorry." Ned Beaumont backed swiftly to the door, felt behind him for the knob, found it, and had the door open. "I won't be gone long." He jumped out and slammed the door.

The rain had stopped. He left the path and ran through tall grass around the other side of the house. From the house came the sound of another door slamming in the rear. The river was audible not far to Ned Beaumont's left. He worked his way through underbrush towards it.

A high-pitched sharp whistle, not loud, sounded somewhere behind him. He floundered through an area of soft mud to a clump of trees and turned away from the river among them. The whistle came again, on his right. Beyond the trees were shoulder-high bushes. He went among them, bending forward from the waist for concealment, though the night's blackness was all but complete.

His way was uphill, up a hill frequently slippery, always uneven, through brush that tore his face and hands, caught his clothing. Three times he fell. He stumbled many times. The



whistle did not come again. He did not find the Buick. He did not find the road along which he had come.

He dragged his feet now and stumbled where there were no obstructions and when presently he had topped the hill and was going down its other slope he began to fall more often. At the bottom of the hill he found a road and turned to the right on it. Its clay stuck to his feet in increasing bulk so that he had to stop time after time to scrape it off. He used his pistol to scrape it off.

When he heard a dog bark behind him he stopped and turned drunkenly to look back. Close to the road, fifty feet behind him, was the vague outline of a house he had passed. He retraced his steps and came to a tall gate. The dog—a shapeless monster in the night—hurled itself at the other side of the gate and barked terrifically.

Ned Beaumont fumbled along an end of the gate, found the catch, unfastened it, and staggered in. The dog backed away, circling, feinting attacks it never made, filling the night with clamor.

A window screeched up and a heavy voice called: "What the hell are you doing to that dog?"

Ned Beaumont laughed weakly. Then he shook himself and replied in not too thin a voice: "This is Beaumont of the District Attorney's office. I want to use your phone. There's a dead man down there."

The heavy voice roared: "I don't know what you're talking about. Shut up, Jeanie!" The dog barked three times with increased energy and became silent. "Now what is it?"

"I want to phone. District Attorney's office. There's a dead man down there."

The heavy voice exclaimed: "The hell you say!" The window screeched shut.

The dog began its barking and circling and feinting again. Ned Beaumont threw his muddy pistol at it. It turned and ran out of sight behind the house.

The front door was opened by a red-faced barrel-bodied short man in a long blue night-shirt. "Holy Maria, you're a mess!"

he gasped when Ned Beaumont came into the light from the doorway.

"Phone," Ned Beaumont said.

The red-faced man caught him as he swayed. "Here," he said gruffly, "tell me who to call and what to say. You can't do anything."

"Phone," Ned Beaumont said.

The red-faced man steadied him along a hallway, opened a door, said: "There she is and it's a damned good thing for you the old woman ain't home or you'd never get in with all that mud on you."

Ned Beaumont fell into the chair in front of the telephone, but he did not immediately reach for the telephone. He scowled at the man in the blue night-shirt and said thickly: "Go out and shut the door."

The red-faced man had not come into the room. He shut the door.

Ned Beaumont picked up the receiver, leaned forward so that he was propped against the table by his elbows on it, and called Paul Madvig's number. Half a dozen times while he waited his eyelids closed, but each time he forced them open again and when, at last, he spoke into the telephone it was clearly.

"Lo, Paul—Ned. . . . Never mind that. Listen to me. Mathews's committed suicide at his place on the river and didn't leave a will. . . . Listen to me. This is important. With a lot of debts and no will naming an executor it'll be up to the courts to appoint somebody to administer the estate. Get that? . . . Yes. See that it comes up before the right judge—Phelps, say—and we can keep the *Observer* out of the fight—except on our side—till after election. Got that? . . . All right, all right, now listen. That's only part of it. This is what's got to be done now. The *Observer* is loaded with dynamite for the morning. You've got to stop it. I'd say get Phelps out of bed and get an injunction out of him—anything to stop it till you can show the *Observer's* hired men where they stand now that the paper's going to be bossed for a month or so by our friends. . . . I can't tell you now, Paul, but it's dynamite and you've got to keep it from

going on sale. Get Phelps out of bed and go down and look at it yourselves. You've got maybe three hours before it's out on the streets. . . . That's right. . . . What? . . . Opal? Oh, she's all right. She's with me. . . . Yes, I'll bring her home. . . . And will you phone the county people about Mathews? I'm going back there now. Right."

He laid the receiver on the table and stood up, staggered to the door, got it open after the second attempt, and fell out into the hallway, where the wall kept him from tumbling down on the floor.

The red-faced man came hurrying to him. "Just lean on me, brother, and I'll make you comfortable. I got a blanket spread over the davenport so we won't have to worry about the mud and—"

Ned Beaumont said: "I want to borrow a car. I've got to go back to Mathews's."

"Is it him that's dead?"

"Yes."

The red-faced man raised his eyebrows and made a squeaky whistling sound.

"Will you lend me the car?" Ned Beaumont demanded.

"My God, brother, be reasonable! How could you drive a car?"

Ned Beaumont backed away from the other, unsteadily. "I'll walk," he said.

The red-faced man glared at him. "You won't neither. If you'll keep your hair on till I get my pants I'll drive you back, though likely enough you'll die on me on the way."

Opal Madvig and Eloise Mathews were together in the large ground-floor room when Ned Beaumont was carried rather than led into it by the red-faced man. The men had come in without knocking. The two girls were standing close together, wide-eyed, startled.

Ned Beaumont pulled himself out of his companion's arms and looked dully around the room. "Where's Shad?" he mumbled.

Opal answered him: "He's gone. All of them have gone."

"All right," he said, speaking diffculty. "I want to talk to you alone."

Eloise Mathews ran over to him. "You killed him!" she cried. He giggled idiotically and tried to put his arms around her. She screamed, struck him in the face with an open hand.

He fell straight back without bending. The red-faced man tried to catch him, but could not. He did not move at all after he struck the floor.

## VII. THE HENCHMEN

### I

Senator Henry put his napkin on the table and stood up. Rising, he seemed taller than he was and younger. His somewhat small head, under its thin covering of grey hair, was remarkably symmetrical. Aging muscles sagged in his patrician face, accentuating its vertical lines, but slackness had not yet reached his lips, nor was it apparent that the years had in any way touched his eyes: they were a greenish grey, deep-set, not large but brilliant, and their lids were firm. He spoke with studied grave courtesy: "You'll forgive me if I carry Paul off upstairs for a little while?"

His daughter replied: "Yes, if you'll leave me Mr. Beaumont and if you'll promise not to stay up there all evening."

Ned Beaumont smiled politely, inclining his head.

He and Janet Henry went into a white-walled room where coal burned sluggishly in a grate under a white mantelpiece and put somber red gleams on the mahogany furniture.

She turned on a lamp beside the piano and sat down there with her back to the keyboard, her head between Ned Beaumont and the lamp. Her blond hair caught lamplight and held it in a nimbus around her head. Her black gown was of some suèdelike material that reflected no light and she wore no jewelry.

Ned Beaumont leaned over to knock ash from his cigar down

on the burning coal. A dark pearl in his shirt-bosom, twinkling in the fire's glow as he moved, was like a red eye winking. When he straightened, he asked: "You'll play something?"

"Yes, if you wish—though I don't play exceptionally well—but later. I'd like to talk to you now while I've an opportunity." Her hands were together in her lap. Her arms, held straight, forced her shoulders up and in towards her neck.

Ned Beaumont nodded politely, but did not say anything. He left the fireplace and sat not far from her on a sofa with lyre ends. Though he was attentive, there was no curiosity in his mien.

Turning on the piano-bench to face him directly, she asked: "How is Opal?" Her voice was low, intimate.

His voice was casual: "Perfectly all right as far as I know, though I haven't seen her since last week." He lifted his cigar half a foot towards his mouth, lowered it, and as if the question had just come to his mind asked: "Why?"

She opened her brown eyes wide. "Isn't she in bed with a nervous break-down?"

"Oh, that!" he said carelessly, smiling. "Didn't Paul tell you?"

"Yes, he told me she was in bed with a nervous break-down." She stared at him, perplexed. "He told me that."

Ned Beaumont's smile became gentle. "I suppose he's sensitive about it," he said slowly, looking at his cigar. Then he looked up at her and moved his shoulders a little. "There's nothing the matter with her that way. It's simply that she got the foolish idea that he had killed your brother and—still more foolishly—was going around talking about it. Well, Paul couldn't have his daughter running around accusing him of murder, so he had to keep her home till she gets the notion out of her head."

"You mean she's—" she hesitated: her eyes were bright—"she's—well—a prisoner?"

"You make it sound melodramatic," he protested carelessly. "She's only a child. Isn't making children stay in their rooms one of the usual ways of disciplining them?"

Janet Henry replied hastily: "Oh, yes! Only—" She looked at her hands in her lap, up at his face again. "But why did she think that?"

Ned Beaumont's voice was tepid as his smile. "Who doesn't?" he asked.

She put her hands on the edge of the piano-bench beside her and leaned forward. Her white face was earnestly set. "That's what I wanted to ask you, Mr. Beaumont. Do people think that?"

He nodded. His face was placid.

Her knuckles were white over the bench-edge. Her voice was parched asking: "Why?"

He rose from the sofa and crossed to the fireplace to drop the remainder of his cigar into the fire. When he returned to his seat he crossed his long legs and leaned back at ease. "The other side thinks it's good politics to make people think that," he said. There was nothing in his voice, his face, his manner to show that he had any personal interest in what he was talking about.

She frowned. "But, Mr. Beaumont, why should people think it unless there's some sort of evidence, or something that can be made to look like evidence?"

He looked curiously and amusedly at her. "There is, of course," he said. "I thought you knew that." He combed a side of his mustache with a thumb-nail. "Didn't you get any of the anonymous letters that've been going around?"

She stood up quickly. Excitement distorted her face. "Yes, today!" she exclaimed. "I wanted to show it to you, to—"

He laughed softly and raised a hand, palm out in an arresting gesture. "Don't bother. They all seem to be pretty much alike and I've seen plenty of them."

She sat down again, slowly, reluctantly.

He said: "Well, those letters, the stuff the *Observer* was printing till we pulled it out of the fight, the talk the others have been circulating"—he shrugged his thin shoulders—"they've taken what facts there are and made a pretty swell case against Paul."

She took her lower lip from between her teeth to ask: "Is-is he actually in danger?"

Ned Beaumont nodded and spoke with calm certainty: "If he loses the election, loses his hold on the city and state government, they'll electrocute him."

She shivered and asked in a voice that shook: "But he's safe if he wins?"

Ned Beaumont nodded again. "Sure."

She caught her breath. Her lips trembled so that her words came out jerkily: "Will he win?"

"I think so."

"And it won't make any difference then no matter how much evidence there is against him, he'll—" her voice broke "—he'll not be in danger?"

"He won't be tried," Ned Beaumont told her. Abruptly he sat up straight. He shut his eyes tight, opened them, and stared at her tense pale face. A glad light came into his eyes, gladness spread over his face. He laughed—not loud but in complete delight—and stood up exclaiming: "Judith herself!"

Janet Henry sat breathlessly still, looking at him with uncomprehending brown eyes in a blank white face.

He began to walk around the room in an irregular route, talking happily—not to her—though now and then he turned his head over his shoulder to smile at her. "That's the game, of course," he said. "She could put up with Paul—be polite to him—for the sake of the political backing her father needed, but that would have its limits. Or that's all that would be necessary, Paul being so much in love with her. But when she decided Paul had killed her brother and was going to escape punishment unless she—That's splendid! Paul's daughter and his sweetheart both trying to steer him to the electric chair. He certainly has a lot of luck with women." He had a slender pale-green-spotted cigar in one hand now. He halted in front of Janet Henry, clipped the end of the cigar, and said, not accusingly, but as if sharing a discovery with her: "You sent those anonymous letters around. Certainly you did. They were written on the typewriter in the room where your brother and Opal used to meet. He had a key and

she had a key. She didn't write them because she was stirred up by them. You did. You took his key when it was turned over to you and your father with the rest of his stuff by the police, sneaked into the room, and wrote them. That's fine." He began to walk again. He said: "Well, we'll have to make the Senator get in a squad of good able-bodied nurses and lock you in your room with a nervous break-down. It's getting to be epidemic among our politicians' daughters, but we've got to make sure of the election even if every house in town has to have its patient." He turned his head over his shoulder to smile amiably at her.

She put a hand to her throat. Otherwise she did not move. She did not speak.

He said: "The Senator won't give us much trouble, luckily. He doesn't care about anything—not you or his dead son—as much as he does about being re-elected and he knows he can't do that without Paul." He laughed. "That's what drove you into the Judith rôle, huh? You knew your father wouldn't split with Paul—even if he thought him guilty—till the election was won. Well, that's a comforting thing to know—for us."

When he stopped talking to light his cigar she spoke. She had taken her hand down from her throat. Her hands were in her lap. She sat erect without stiffness. Her voice was cool and composed. She said: "I am not good at lying. I know Paul killed Taylor. I wrote the letters."

Ned Beaumont took the burning cigar from his mouth, came back to the lyre-end sofa, and sat down facing her. His face was grave, but without hostility. He said: "You hate Paul, don't you? Even if I proved to you that he didn't kill Taylor you'd still hate him, wouldn't you?"

"Yes," she replied, her light brown eyes steady on his darker ones, "I think I should."

"That's it," he said. "You don't hate him because you think he killed your brother. You think he killed your brother because you hate him."

She moved her head slowly from side to side. "No," she said.



He smiled skeptically. Then he asked: "Have you talked it over with your father?"

She bit her lip and her face flushed a little.

Ned Beaumont smiled again. "And he told you it was ridiculous," he said.

Pink deepened in her cheeks. She started to say something, but did not.

He said: "If Paul killed your brother your father knows it."

She looked down at her hands in her lap and said dully, miserably: "My father should know it, but he will not believe it."

Ned Beaumont said: "He ought to know." His eyes became narrower. "Did Paul say anything at all to him that night about Taylor and Opal?"

She raised her head, astonished. "Don't you know what happened that night?" she asked.

"No."

"It hadn't anything to do with Taylor and Opal," she said, word tumbling over word in her eagerness to get them spoken. "It—" She jerked her face towards the door and shut her mouth with a click. Deep-chested rumbling laughter had come through the door, and the sound of approaching steps. She faced Ned Beaumont again, hastily, lifting her hands in an appealing gesture. "I've got to tell you," she whispered, desperately earnest. "Can I see you tomorrow?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"My place?" he suggested.

She nodded quickly. He had time to mutter his address, she to whisper, "After ten?" and he to nod before Senator Henry and Paul Madvig came into the room.

## 2

Paul Madvig and Ned Beaumont said good-night to the Henrys at half past ten o'clock and got into a brown sedan which Madvig drove down Charles Street. When they had ridden a block and a half Madvig blew his breath out in a satisfied gust

and said: "Jesus, Ned, you don't know how tickled I am that you and Janet are hitting it off so nice."

Ned Beaumont, looking obliquely at the blond man's profile, said: "I can get along with anybody."

Madvig chuckled. "Yes, you can," he said indulgently, "like hell."

Ned Beaumont's lips curved in a thin secretive smile. He said: "I've got something I want to talk to you about tomorrow. Where'll you be, say, in the middle of the afternoon?"

Madvig turned the sedan into China Street. "At the office," he said. "It's the first of the month. Why don't you do your talking now? There's a lot of night left yet."

"I don't know it all now. How's Opal?"

"She's all right," Madvig said gloomily, then exclaimed: "Christ! I wish I could be sore at the kid. It'd make it a lot easier." They passed a street-light. He blurted out: "She's not pregnant."

Ned Beaumont did not say anything. His face was expressionless.

Madvig reduced the sedan's speed as they approached the Log Cabin Club. His face was red. He asked huskily: "What do you think, Ned? Was she"—he cleared his throat noisily—"his mistress? Or was it just boy and girl stuff?"

Ned Beaumont said: "I don't know. I don't care. Don't ask her, Paul."

Madvig stopped the sedan and sat for a moment at the wheel staring straight ahead. Then he cleared his throat again and spoke in a low hoarse voice: "You're not the worst guy in the world, Ned."

"Uh-uh," Ned Beaumont agreed as they got out of the sedan.

They entered the Club, separating casually under the Governor's portrait at the head of the stairs on the second floor.

Ned Beaumont went into a rather small room in the rear where five men were playing stud poker and three were watching them play. The players made a place for him at the table and by three o'clock, when the game broke up, he had won some four hundred dollars.

It was nearly noon when Janet Henry arrived at Ned Beaumont's rooms. He had been pacing the floor, alternately biting his finger-nails and puffing at cigars, for more than an hour. He went without haste to the door when she rang, opened it, and, smiling with an air of slight but pleasant surprise, said: "Good morning."

"I'm awfully sorry to be late," she began, "but—"

"But you're not," he assured her. "It was to have been any time after ten."

He ushered her into his living-room.

"I like this," she said, turning around slowly, examining the old-fashioned room, the height of its ceiling, the width of its windows, the tremendous mirror over the fireplace, the red plush of the furniture. "It's delightful." She turned her brown eyes towards a half-open door. "Is that your bedroom?"

"Yes. Would you like to see it?"

"I'd love to."

He showed her the bedroom, then the kitchen and bathroom.

"It's perfect," she said as they returned to the living-room. "I didn't know there could be any more of these left in a city as horribly up to date as ours has become."

He made a little bow to acknowledge her approval. "I think it's rather nice and, as you can see, there's no one here to eavesdrop on us unless they're stowed away in a closet, which isn't likely."

She drew herself up and looked straight into his eyes. "I did not think of that. We may not agree, may even become—or now be—enemies, but I know you're a gentleman, or I shouldn't be here."

He asked in an amused tone: "You mean I've learned not to wear tan shoes with blue suits? Things like that?"

"I don't mean things like that."

He smiled. "Then you're wrong. I'm a gambler and a politician's hanger-on."

"I'm not wrong." A pleading expression came into her eyes.

"Please don't let us quarrel, at least not until we must."

"I'm sorry." His smile was apologetic now. "Won't you sit down?"

She sat down. He sat in another wide red chair facing her. He said: "Now you were going to tell me what happened at your house the night your brother was killed."

"Yes," issuing from her mouth, was barely audible. Her face became pink and she transferred her gaze to the floor. When she raised her eyes again they were shy. Embarrassment clogged her voice: "I wanted you to know. You are Paul's friend and that—that may make you my enemy, but— I think when you know what happened—when you know the truth—you'll not be—at least not be my enemy. I don't know. Perhaps you'll— But you ought to know. Then you can decide. And he hasn't told you." She looked intently at him so that shyness went out of her eyes. "Has he?"

"I don't know what happened at your house that night," he said. "He didn't tell me."

She leaned towards him quickly to ask: "Doesn't that show it's something he wants to conceal, something he has to conceal?"

He moved his shoulders. "Suppose it does?" His voice was unexcited, uneager.

She frowned. "But you must see— Never mind that now. I'll tell you what happened and you can see it for yourself." She continued to lean far forward, staring at his face with intent brown eyes. "He came to dinner, the first time we'd had him to dinner."

"I knew that," Ned Beaumont said, "and your brother wasn't there."

"Taylor wasn't at the dinner-table," she corrected him earnestly, "but he was up in his room. Only Father, Paul, and I were at the table. Taylor was going out to dinner. He—he wouldn't eat with Paul because of the trouble they'd had about Opal."

Ned Beaumont nodded attentively without warmth.

"After dinner Paul and I were alone for a little while in—in

the room where you and I talked last night and he suddenly put his arms around me and kissed me."

Ned Beaumont laughed, not loudly, but with abrupt irrepressible merriment. Janet Henry looked at him in surprise.

He modified his laugh to a smile and said: "I'm sorry. Go on. I'll tell you later why I laughed." But when she would have gone on he said: "Wait. Did he say anything when he kissed you?"

"No. That is, he may have, but nothing I understood." Perplexity was deepening in her face. "Why?"

Ned Beaumont laughed again. "He ought to've said something about his pound of flesh. It was probably my fault. I had been trying to persuade him not to support your father in the election, had told him that your father was using you as bait to catch his support, and had advised him that if he was willing to be bought that way he ought to be sure and collect his pound of flesh ahead of the election or he'd never get it."

She opened her eyes wide and there was less perplexity in them.

He said: "That was that afternoon, though I didn't think I'd had much luck putting it over." He wrinkled his forehead. "What did you do to him? He was meaning to marry you and was chock-full of respect and what not for you and you must have rubbed him pretty thoroughly the wrong way to make him jump at you like that."

"I didn't do anything to him," she replied slowly, "though it had been a difficult evening. None of us was comfortable. I thought—I tried not to show that—well—that I resented having to entertain him. He wasn't at ease, I know, and I suppose that—his embarrassment—and perhaps a suspicion that you had been right made him—" She finished the sentence with a brief quick outward motion of both hands.

Ned Beaumont nodded. "What happened then?" he asked. "I was furious, of course, and left him."

"Didn't you say anything to him?" Ned Beaumont's eyes twinkled with imperfectly hidden mirth.

"No, and he didn't say anything I could hear. I went up-

stairs and met Father coming down. While I was telling him what had happened—I was as angry with Father as with Paul, because it was Father's fault that Paul was there—we heard Paul going out the front door. And then Taylor came down from his room." Her face became white and tense, her voice husky with emotion. "He heard me talking to Father and he asked me what had happened, but I left him there with Father and went on to my room, too angry to talk any more about it. And I didn't see either of them again until Father came to my room and told me Taylor had—had been killed." She stopped talking and looked white-faced at Ned Beaumont, twisting her fingers together, awaiting his response to her story.

His response was a cool question: "Well, what of it?"

"What of it?" she repeated in amazement. "Don't you see? How could I help knowing then that Taylor had run out after Paul and had caught up with him and had been killed by him? He was furious and—" Her face brightened. "You know his hat wasn't found. He was too much in a hurry—too angry—to stop for his hat. He—"

Ned Beaumont shook his head slowly from side to side and interrupted her. His voice held nothing but certainty. "No," he said. "That won't do. Paul wouldn't've had to kill Taylor and he wouldn't've done it. He could have managed him with one hand and he doesn't lose his head in a fight. I know that. I've seen Paul fight and I've fought with him. That won't do." He drew eyelids closer together around eyes that had become stony. "But suppose he did? I mean accidentally, though I can't believe even that. But could you make anything out of it except self-defense?"

She raised her head scornfully. "If it were self-defense, why should he hide it?"

Ned Beaumont seemed unimpressed. "He wants to marry you," he explained. "It wouldn't help him much to admit he'd killed your brother even—" He chuckled. "I'm getting as bad as you are. Paul didn't kill him, Miss Henry."

Her eyes were stony as his had been. She looked at him and did not speak.

His expression became thoughtful. He asked: "You've only"—he wriggled the fingers of one hand—"the two and two you think you've put together to tell you that your brother ran out after Paul that night?"

"That is enough," she insisted. "He did. He must've. Otherwise—why, otherwise what would he have been doing down there in China Street bare-headed?"

"Your father didn't see him go out?"

"No. He didn't know it either until we heard—"

He interrupted her. "Does he agree with you?"

"He must," she cried. "It's unmistakable. He must, no matter what he says, just as you must." Tears were in her eyes now. "You can't expect me to believe that you don't, Mr. Beaumont. I don't know what you knew before. You found Taylor dead. I don't know what else you found, but now you must know the truth."

Ned Beaumont's hands began to tremble. He slumped farther down in his chair so he could thrust his hands into his trousers-pockets. His face was tranquil except for hard lines of strain around his mouth. He said: "I found him dead. There was nobody else there. I didn't find anything else."

"You have now," she said.

His mouth twitched under his dark mustache. His eyes became hot with anger. He spoke in a low, harsh, deliberately bitter voice: "I know whoever killed your brother did the world a favor."

She shrank back in her chair with a hand thrown up to her throat, at first, but almost immediately the horror went out of her face and she sat upright and looked compassionately at him. She said softly: "I know. You're Paul's friend. It hurts."

He lowered his head a little and muttered: "It was a rotten thing to say. It was silly." He smiled wryly. "You see I was right about not being a gentleman." He stopped smiling and shame went out of his eyes leaving them clear and steady. He said in a quiet voice: "You're right about my being Paul's friend. I'm that no matter who he killed."

After a long moment of earnest staring at him she spoke in

a small flat voice: "Then this is useless? I thought if I could show you the truth—" She broke off with a hopeless gesture in which hands, shoulders, and head took part.

He moved his head slowly from side to side.

She sighed and stood up holding out her hand. "I'm sorry and disappointed, but we needn't be enemies, need we?"

He rose facing her, but did not take her hand. He said: "The part of you that's tricked Paul and is trying to trick him is my enemy."

She held her hand there while asking: "And the other part of me, the part that hasn't anything to do with that?"

He took her hand and bowed over it.

#### 4

When Janet Henry had gone Ned Beaumont went to his telephone, called a number, and said: "Hello, this is Mr. Beaumont. Has Mr. Madvig come in yet? . . . When he comes will you tell him I called and will be in to see him? . . . Yes, thanks."

He looked at his wrist-watch. It was a little after one o'clock. He lit a cigar and sat down at a window, smoking and staring at the grey church across the street. Out-blown cigar-smoke recoiled from the window-panes in grey clouds over his head. His teeth crushed the end of his cigar. He sat there for ten minutes, until his telephone-bell rang.

He went to the telephone. "Hello. . . . Yes, Harry. . . . Sure. Where are you? . . . I'm coming downtown. Wait there for me. . . . Half an hour. . . . Right."

He threw his cigar into the fireplace, put on his hat and overcoat, and went out. He walked six blocks to a restaurant, ate a salad and rolls, drank a cup of coffee, walked four blocks to a small hotel named Majestic, and rode to the fourth floor in an elevator operated by an undersized youth who called him Ned and asked what he thought of the third race.

Ned Beaumont thought and said: "Lord Byron ought to do it."

The elevator-operator said: "I hope you're wrong. I got Pipe-organ."



Ned Beaumont shrugged. "Maybe, but he's carrying a lot of weight." He went to room 417 and knocked on the door.

Harry Sloss, in his shirt-sleeves, opened the door. He was a thickset pale man of thirty-five, broad-faced and partially bald. He said: "On the dot. Come on in."

When Sloss had shut the door Ned Beaumont asked: "What's the diffugalty?"

The thickset man went over to the bed and sat down. He scowled anxiously at Ned Beaumont. "It don't look so damned good to me, Ned."

"What don't?"

"This thing of Ben going to the Hall with it."

Ned Beaumont said irritably: "All right. Any time you're ready to tell me what you're talking about's soon enough for me."

Sloss raised a pale broad hand. "Wait, Ned, I'll tell you what it's about. Just listen." He felt in his pocket for cigarettes, bringing out a package mashed limp. "You remember the night the Henry kid was pooped?"

Ned Beaumont's "Uh-huh" was carelessly uttered.

"Remember me and Ben had just come in when you got there, at the Club?"

"Yes."

"Well, listen: we saw Paul and the kid arguing up there under the trees."

Ned Beaumont brushed a side of his mustache with a thumb-nail, once, and spoke slowly, looking puzzled: "But I saw you get out of the car in front of the Club—that was just after I found him—and you came up the other way." He moved a forefinger. "And Paul was already in the Club ahead of you."

Sloss nodded his broad head vigorously. "That's all right," he said, "but we'd drove on down China Street to Pinky Klein's place and he wasn't there and we turned around and drove back to the Club."

Ned Beaumont nodded. "Just what did you see?"

"We saw Paul and the kid standing there under the trees arguing."

"You could see that as you rode past?"

Sloss nodded vigorously again.

"It was a dark spot," Ned Beaumont reminded him. "I don't see how you could've made out their faces riding past like that, unless you slowed up or stopped."

"No, we didn't, but I'd know Paul anywhere," Sloss insisted.

"Maybe, but how'd you know it was the kid with him?"

"It was. Sure, it was. We could see enough of him to know that."

"And you could see they were arguing? What do you mean by that? Fighting?"

"No, but standing like they were having an argument. You know how you can tell when people are arguing sometimes by the way they stand."

Ned Beaumont smiled mirthlessly. "Yes, if one of them's standing on the other's face." His smile vanished. "And that's what Ben went to the Hall with?"

"Yes. I don't know whether he went in with it on his own account or whether Farr got hold of it somehow and sent for him, but anyhow he spilled it to Farr. That was yesterday."

"How'd you hear about it, Harry?"

"Farr's hunting for me," Sloss said. "That's the way I heard about it. Ben'd told him I was with him and Farr sent word for me to drop in and see him, but I don't want any part of it."

"I hope you don't, Harry," Ned Beaumont said. "What are you going to say if Farr catches you?"

"I'm not going to let him catch me if I can help it. That's what I wanted to see you about." He cleared his throat and moistened his lips. "I thought maybe I ought to get out of town for a week or two, till it kind of blows over, and that'd take a little money."

Ned Beaumont smiled and shook his head. "That's not the thing to do," he told the thickset man. "If you want to help Paul go tell Farr you couldn't recognize the two men under the trees and that you don't think anybody in your car could."

"All right, that's what I'll do," Sloss said readily, "but, listen,

Ned, I ought to get something out of it. I'm taking a chance and—well—you know how it is."

Ned Beaumont nodded. "We'll pick you out a soft job after election, one you'll have to show up on maybe an hour a day."

"That'll be—" Sloss stood up. His green-flecked palish eyes were urgent. "I'll tell you, Ned, I'm broke as hell. Couldn't you make it a little dough now instead? It'd come in damned handy."

"Maybe. I'll take it over with Paul."

"Do that, Ned, and give me a ring."

"Sure. So long."

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From the Majestic Hotel Ned Beaumont went to the City Hall, to the District Attorney's office, and said he wanted to see Mr. Farr.

The round-faced youth to whom he said it left the outer office, returning a minute later apologetic of mien. "I'm sorry, Mr. Beaumont, but Mr. Farr is not in."

"When will he be back?"

"I don't know. His secretary says he didn't leave word."

"I'll take a chance. I'll wait awhile in his office."

The round-faced youth stood in his way. "Oh, you can't do—"

Ned Beaumont smiled his nicest smile at the youth and asked softly: "Don't you like this job, son?"

The youth hesitated, fidgeted, and stepped out of Ned Beaumont's way. Ned Beaumont walked down the inner corridor to the District Attorney's door and opened it.

Farr looked up from his desk, sprang to his feet. "Was that you?" he cried. "Damn that boy! He never gets anything right. A Mr. Bauman, he said."

"No harm done," Ned Beaumont said mildly. "I got in."

He let the District Attorney shake his hand up and down and lead him to a chair. When they were seated he asked idly: "Anything new?"

"Nothing." Farr rocked back in his chair, thumbs hooked in

lower vest-pockets. "Just the same old grind, though God knows there's enough of that."

"How's the electioneering going?"

"It could be better"—a shadow passed over the District Attorney's pugnacious red face—"but I guess we'll manage all right."

Ned Beaumont kept idleness in his voice. "What's the matter?"

"This and that. Things always come up. That's politics, I guess."

"Anything I can do—or Paul—to help?" Ned Beaumont asked and then, when Farr had shaken his red-stubble-covered head: "This talk that Paul's got something to do with the Henry killing the worst thing you're up against?"

A frightened gleam came into Farr's eyes, disappeared as he blinked. He sat up straight in his chair. "Well," he said cautiously, "there's a lot of feeling that we ought to've cleared the murder up before this. That is one of the things—maybe one of the biggest."

"Made any progress since I saw you last? Turned up anything new on it?"

Farr shook his head. His eyes were wary. Ned Beaumont smiled without warmth. "Still taking it slow on some of the angles?"

The District Attorney squirmed in his chair. "Well, yes, of course, Ned."

Ned Beaumont nodded approvingly. His eyes were shiny with malice. His voice was a taunt: "Is the Ben Ferriss angle one of them that you're taking it slow on?"

Farr's blunt undershot mouth opened and shut. He rubbed his lips together. His eyes, after their first startled widening, became devoid of expression. He said: "I don't know whether there's anything at all in Ferriss's story or not, Ned. I don't guess there is. I didn't even think enough of it to tell you about it."

Ned Beaumont laughed derisively.

Farr said: "You know I wouldn't hold out anything on you

and Paul, anything that was important. You know me well enough for that."

"We knew you before you got nerves," Ned Beaumont replied. "But that's all right. If you want the fellow that was in the car with Ferriss you can pick him up right now in room 417 at the Majestic."

Farr was staring at his green desk-set, at the dancing nude figure holding an airplane aloft between two slanting pens. His face was lumpy. He said nothing.

Ned Beaumont rose from his chair smiling with thin lips. He said: "Paul's always glad to help the boys out of holes. Do you think it would help if he'd let himself be arrested and tried for the Henry murder?"

Farr did not move his eyes from the green desk-set. He said doggedly: "It's not for me to tell Paul what to do."

"There's a thought!" Ned Beaumont exclaimed. He leaned over the side of the desk until his face was near the District Attorney's ear and lowered his voice to a confidential key. "And here's another one that goes with it. It's not for you to do much Paul wouldn't tell you to do."

He went out grinning, but stopped grinning when he was outside.

## VIII. THE KISS-OFF

### I

Ned Beaumont opened a door marked *East State Construction & Contracting Company* and exchanged good-afternoons with the two young ladies at desks inside, then he passed through a larger room in which there were half a dozen men to whom he spoke and opened a door marked *Private*. He went into a square room where Paul Madvig sat at a battered desk looking at papers placed in front of him by a small man who hovered respectfully over his shoulder.

Madvig raised his head and said: "Hello, Ned." He pushed the papers aside and told the small man: "Bring this junk back after while."

The small man gathered up his papers and, saying, "Certain-

ly, sir," and, "How do you do, Mr. Beaumont?" left the room.

Madvig said: "You look like you'd had a tough night, Ned. What'd you do? Sit down."

Ned Beaumont had taken off his overcoat. He put it on a chair, put his hat on it, and took out a cigar. "No, I'm all right. What's new in your life?" He sat on a corner of the battered desk.

"I wish you'd go see M'Laughlin," the blond man said. "You can handle him if anybody can."

"All right. What's the matter with him?"

Madvig grimaced. "Christ knows! I thought I had him lined up, but he's going shifty on us."

A somber gleam came into Ned Beaumont's dark eyes. He looked down at the blond man and said: "Him too, huh?"

Madvig asked slowly, after a moment's deliberation: "What do you mean by that, Ned?"

Ned Beaumont's reply was another question: "Is everything going along to suit you?"

Madvig moved his big shoulders impatiently, but his eyes did not lose their surveying stare. "Nor so damned bad either," he said. "We can get along without M'Laughlin's batch of votes if we have to."

"Maybe." Ned Beaumont's lips had become thin, "but we can't keep on losing them and come out all right." He put his cigar in a corner of his mouth and said around it: "You know we're not as well off as we were two weeks ago."

Madvig grinned indulgently at the man on his desk. "Jesus, you like to sing them, Ned! Don't anything ever look right to you?" He did not wait for a reply, but went on placidly: "I've never been through a campaign yet that didn't look like it was going to hell at some time or other. They don't, though."

Ned Beaumont was lighting his cigar. He blew smoke out and said: "That doesn't mean they never will." He pointed the cigar at Madvig's chest. "If Taylor Henry's killing isn't cleared up pronto you won't have to worry about the campaign. You'll be sunk whoever wins."

Madvig's blue eyes became opaque. There was no other

in his face. His voice was unchanged. "Just what do you mean by that, Ned?"

"Everybody in town thinks you killed him."

"Yes?" Madvig put a hand up to his chin, rubbed it thoughtfully. "Don't let that worry you. I've had things said about me before."

Ned Beaumont smiled tepidly and asked with mock admiration: "Is there anything you haven't been through before? Ever been given the electric cure?"

The blond man laughed. "And don't think I ever will," he said.

"You're not very far from it right now, Paul," Ned Beaumont said softly.

Madvig laughed again. "Jesus Christ!" he scoffed.

Ned Beaumont shrugged. "You're not busy?" he asked. "I'm not taking up your time with my nonsense?"

"I'm listening to you," Madvig told him quietly. "I never lost anything listening to you."

"Thank you, sir. Why do you suppose M'Laughlin's wiggling out from under?"

Madvig shook his head.

"He figures you're licked," Ned Beaumont said. "Everybody knows the police haven't tried to find Taylor's murderer and everybody thinks it's because you killed him. M'Laughlin figures that's enough to lick you at the polls this time."

"Yes? He figures they'd rather have Shad running the city than me? He figures being suspected of one murder makes my rep worse than Shad's?"

Ned Beaumont scowled at the blond man. "You're either kidding yourself or trying to kid me. What's Shad's reputation got to do with it? He's not out in the open behind his candidates. You are and it's your candidates who're responsible for nothing being done about the murder."

Madvig put his hand to his chin again and leaned his elbow on the desk. His handsome ruddy face was unlined. He said: "We've been talking a lot about what other people figure, Ned. Let's talk about what you figure. Figure I'm licked?"

"You probably are," Ned Beaumont said in a low sure voice. "It's a cinch you are if you sit still." He smiled. "But your candidates ought to come out all right."

"That," Madvig said phlegmatically, "ought to be explained."

Ned Beaumont leaned over and carefully knocked cigar-ash into the brass spittoon beside the desk. Then he said, unemotionally: "They're going to cross you up."

"Yes?"

"Why not? You've let Shad take most of the riffraff from behind you. You're counting on the respectable people, the better element, to carry the election. They're getting leery. Well, your candidates make a grand-stand-play, arrest you for murder, and the respectable citizens—delighted with these noble officials who are brave enough to jail their own acknowledged boss when he breaks the law—trample each other to death in their hurry to get to the polls and elect the heroes to four more years of city-administering. You can't blame the boys much. They know they're sitting pretty if they do it and out of work if they don't."

Madvig took his hand from his chin to ask: "You don't count much on their loyalty, do you, Ned?"

Ned Beaumont smiled. "Just as much as you do," he replied. His smile went away. "I'm guessing, Paul. I went in to see Farr this afternoon. I had to walk in, crash the gate—he tried to dodge me. He pretended he hadn't been digging into the killing. He tried to stall me on what he'd found out. In the end he dummied up on me." He made a disdainful mouth. "Farr, the guy I could always make jump through hoops."

"Well, that's only Farr," Madvig began.

Ned Beaumont cut him short. "Only Farr, and that's the tip-off. Rutledge or Brody or even Rainey might clip you on their own, but if Farr's doing anything it's a pipe he knows the others are with him." He frowned at the blond man's stolid face. "You can stop believing me any time you want to, Paul."

Madvig made a careless gesture with the hand he had held to his chin. "I'll let you know when I stop," he said. "How'd you happen to drop in on Farr?"

"Harry Sloss called me up today. It seems he and Ben Fer-



riss saw you arguing with Taylor in China Street the night of the murder, or claim they did." Ned Beaumont was looking with eyes that held no particular expression at the blond man and his voice was matter-of-fact. "Ben had gone to Farr with it. Harry wanted to be paid for not going. There's a couple of your Club-members reading the signs. I've been watching Farr lose his nerve for some time, so I went in to check him up."

Madvig nodded. "And you're sure he's knifing me?"

"Yes."

Madvig got up from his chair and went to the window. He stood there, hands in trousers-pockets, looking through the glass for perhaps three minutes while Ned Beaumont, sitting on the desk, smoked and looked at the blond man's wide back. Then, not turning his head, Madvig asked: "What'd you say to Harry?"

"Stalled him."

Madvig left the window and came back to the desk, but he did not sit down. His ruddiness had deepened. Otherwise no change had come into his face. His voice was level. "What do you think we ought to do?"

"About Sloss? Nothing. The other monkey's already gone to Farr. It doesn't make much difference what Sloss does."

"I didn't mean that. I meant about the whole thing."

Ned Beaumont dropped his cigar into the spittoon. "I've told you. If Taylor Henry's murder isn't cleared up pronto you're sunk. That's the whole thing. That's the only thing worth doing anything about."

Madvig stopped looking at Ned Beaumont. He looked at a wide vacant space on the wall. He pressed his full lips together. Moisture appeared on his temples. He said from deep in his chest: "That won't do. Think up something else."

Ned Beaumont's nostrils moved with his breathing and the brown of his eyes seemed dark as the pupils. He said: "There isn't anything else, Paul. Any other way plays into the hands of either Shad or Farr his crew and either of them will ruin you."

Madvig said somewhat hoarsely: "There must be an out, Ned. Think."

Ned Beaumont left the desk and stood close in front of the blond man. "There isn't. That's the only way. You're going to take it whether you like it or not, or I'm going to take it for you."

Madvig shook his head violently. "No. Lay off."

Ned Beaumont said: "That's one thing I won't do for you, Paul."

Then Madvig looked Ned Beaumont in the eyes and said in a harsh whisper: "I killed him, Ned."

Ned Beaumont drew a breath in and let it out in a long sigh.

Madvig put his hands on Ned Beaumont's shoulders and his words came out thick and blurred. "It was an accident, Ned. He ran down the street after me when I left, with a cane he'd picked up on the way out. We'd had—there'd been some trouble there and he caught up with me and tried to hit me with the stick. I don't know how it happened, but pulling it away from him I hit him on the head with it—not hard—it couldn't've been very hard—but he fell back and smashed his head on the curb."

Ned Beaumont nodded. His face had suddenly become empty of all expression except hard concentration on Madvig's words. He asked in a crisp voice that matched his face: "What happened to the cane?"

"I took it away under my overcoat and burned it. After I knew he was dead I found it in my hand, when I was walking down to the Club, so I put it under my overcoat and then burned it."

"What kind of cane was it?"

"A rough brown one, heavy."

"And his hat?"

"I don't know, Ned. I guess it was knocked off and somebody picked it up."

"He had one on?"

"Yes, sure."

Ned Beaumont brushed a side of his mustache with a thumbnail. "You remember Sloss's and Ferriss's car passing you?"

Madvig shook his head. "No, though they may have."

Ned Beaumont frowned at the blond man. "You gummed

things up plenty by running off with the stick and burning it and keeping quiet all this time," he grumbled. "You had a clear self-defense plea."

"I know, but I didn't want that, Ned," Madvig said hoarsely. "I want Janet Henry more than I ever wanted anything in my life and what chance would I have then, even if it was an accident?"

Ned Beaumont laughed in Madvig's face. It was a low laugh and bitter. He said: "You'd have more chance than you've got now."

Madvig, staring at him, said nothing.

Ned Beaumont said: "She's always thought you killed her brother. She hates you. She's been trying to play you into the electric chair. She's responsible for first throwing suspicion on you with anonymous letters sent around to everybody that might be interested. She's the one that turned Opal against you. She was in my rooms this morning telling me this, trying to turn me. She—"

Madvig said: "That's enough." He stood erect, a big blond man whose eyes were cold blue disks. "What is it, Ned? Do you want her yourself or is it—" He broke off contemptuously. "It doesn't make any difference." He jerked a thumb carelessly at the door. "Get out, you heel, this is the kiss-off."

Ned Beaumont said: "I'll get out when I've finished talking."

Madvig said: "You'll get out when you're told to. You can't say anything I'll believe. You haven't said anything I believe. You never will now."

Ned Beaumont said: "Oke." He picked up his hat and overcoat and went out.

I

Ned Beaumont went home. His face was pale and sullen. He slouched down in one of the big red chairs with a bottle of Bourbon whisky and a glass on the table beside him, but he did not drink. He stared gloomily at his black-shod feet and bit a finger-nail. His telephone-bell rang. He did not answer it. Twilight began to displace day in the room.

The room was dusky when he rose and went to the telephone.

He called a number. Then: "Hello, I'd like to speak to Miss Henry, please." After a pause that he spent whistling tunelessly under his breath, he said: "Hello, Miss Henry? . . . Yes. . . . I've just come from telling Paul all about it, about you. . . . Yes, and you were right. He did what you counted on his doing. . . ." He laughed. "You did. You knew he'd call me a liar, refuse to listen to me, and throw me out, and he did all of it. . . . No, no, that's all right. It had to happen. . . . No, really. . . . Oh, it's probably permanent enough. Things were said that can't easily be unsaid. . . . Yes, all evening, I think. . . . That'll be fine. . . . All right. 'By."

He poured out a glass of whisky then and drank it. After that he went into his darkening bedroom, set his alarm-clock for eight o'clock, and lay down fully clothed on his back on the bed. For a while he looked at the ceiling. Then he slept, breathing irregularly, until the alarm rang.

He got up sluggishly from his bed and, switching on lights, went into the bathroom, washed his face and hands, put on a fresh collar, and started a fire in the living-room fireplace. He read a newspaper until Janet Henry arrived.

She was excited. Though she at once began to assure Ned Beaumont that she had not foreseen the result of his telling Paul about her visit, had not counted on it, elation danced frankly in her eyes and she could not keep smiles from curving her lips while they shaped the apologetic words.

He said: "It doesn't matter. I'd've had to do it if I'd known how it was going to turn out. I suppose I did know down underneath. It's one of those things. And if you'd told me it would happen I'd only've taken that for a challenge and would've jumped to it."

She held her hands out to him. "I'm glad," she said. "I won't pretend I'm not."

"I'm sorry," he told her as he took her hands, "but I wouldn't have gone a step out of my way to avoid it."

She said: "And now you know I'm right. He did kill Taylor."

**Her eyes were inquisitive.**

He nodded. "He told me he did."

"And you'll help me now?" Her hands pressed his. She came closer to him.

He hesitated, frowning down at her eager face. "It was self-defense, or an accident," he said slowly. "I can't--"

"It was murder!" she cried. "Of course he'd say it was self-defense!" She shook her head impatiently. "And even if it was self-defense or an accident, shouldn't he be made to go into court and prove it like anybody else?"

"He's waited too long. This month he's kept quiet would be against him."

"Well, whose fault was that?" she demanded. "And do you think he would have kept quiet so long if it had been self-defense?"

He nodded with slow emphasis. "That was on your account. He's in love with you. He didn't want you to know he'd killed your brother."

"I do know it!" she cried fiercely. "And everybody's going to know it!"

He moved his shoulders a little. His face was gloomy.

"You won't help me?" she asked.

"No."

"Why? You've quarreled with him."

"I believe his story. I know it's too late for him to put it across in court. We're through, but I won't do that to him." He moistened his lips. "Let him alone. It's likely they'll do it to him without your help or mine."

"I won't," she said. "I won't let him alone until he's been punished as he deserves." She caught her breath and her eyes darkened. "Do you believe him enough to risk finding proof that he lied to you?"

"What do you mean?" he asked cautiously.

"Will you help me find proof of the truth, whether he's lying or not? There must be positive proof somewhere, some proof that we can find. If you really believe him you won't be afraid to help me find it."

He studied her face awhile before asking: "If I do and we

find your positive proof, will you promise to accept it whichever way it stacks up?"

"Yes," she said readily, "if you will too."

"And you'll keep what we find to yourself till we've finished the job—found our positive proof—won't use what we find against him till we've got it all?"

"Yes."

"It's a bargain," he said.

She sobbed happily and tears came to her eyes.

He said: "Sit down." His face was lean and hard, his voice curt. "We've got to get schemes rigged. Have you heard from him this afternoon or evening, since he and I had our row?"

"No."

"Then we can't be sure how you stand with him. There's a chance he may have decided later that I was right. That won't make any difference between him and me now—we're done—but we've got to find out as soon as we can." He scowled at her feet and brushed his mustache with a thumb-nail. "You'll have to wait till he comes to you. You can't afford to call him up. If he's shaky about you that might decide him. How sure of him are you?"

She was sitting in the chair by the table. She said: "I'm as sure of him as a woman can be of a man." She uttered a little embarrassed laugh. "I know that sounds— But I am, Mr. Beaumont."

He nodded. "Then that's probably all right, but you ought to know definitely by tomorrow. Have you ever tried to pump him?"

"Not yet, not really. I was waiting—"

"Well, that's out for the time being. No matter how sure you are of him you'll have to be careful now. Have you picked up anything you haven't told me about?"

"No," she said, shaking her head. "I haven't known very well how to go about it. That's why I so wanted you to—"

He interrupted her again: "Didn't it occur to you to hire a private detective?"

"Yes, but I was afraid, afraid I'd go to one who'd

tell Paul. I didn't know who to go to, who I could trust."

"I've got one we can use." He ran fingers through his dark hair. "Now there are two things I want you to find out, if you don't know them now. Are any of your brother's hats missing? Paul says he had a hat on. There was none there when I found him. See if you can find out how many he had and if they're all accounted for"—he smiled obliquely—"except the one I borrowed."

She paid no attention to his smile. She shook her head and raised her hands a little, dispiritedly. "I can't," she said. "We got rid of all his things some time ago and I doubt if anybody knew exactly what he had anyway."

Ned Beaumont shrugged. "I didn't think we'd get anywhere on that," he told her. "The other thing's a walking-stick, whether any of them—his or your father's—are missing, particularly a rough heavy brown one."

"It would be Father's," she said eagerly, "and I think it's there."

"Check it up." He bit his thumb-nail. "That'll be enough for you to do between now and tomorrow, that and maybe find out how you stand with Paul."

"What is it?" she asked. "I mean about the stick." She stood up, excited.

"Paul says your brother attacked him with it and was struck by it while Paul was taking it away from him. He says he carried the stick away and burned it."

"Oh, I'm sure Father's sticks are all there," she cried. Her face was white, her eyes wide.

"Didn't Taylor have any?"

"Only a silver-headed black one." She put a hand on his wrist. "If they're all there it will mean that—"

"It might mean something," he said and put a hand on her hand. "But no tricks," he warned her.

"I won't," she promised. "If you only knew how happy I am to have your help, how much I've wanted it, you'd know you could trust me."

"I hope so." He took his hand from hers.

Alone in his rooms Ned Beaumont walked the floor awhile, his face pinched, his eyes shiny. At twenty minutes to ten he looked at his wrist-watch. Then he put on his overcoat and went down to the Majestic Hotel, where he was told that Harry Sloss was not in. He left the hotel, found a taxicab, got into it, and said: "West Road Inn."

The West Road Inn was a square white building-grey in the night-set among trees back from the road some three miles beyond the city limits. Its ground-floor was brightly lighted and half a dozen automobiles stood in front of it. Others were in a long dark shed off to the left.

Ned Beaumont, nodding familiarly at the doorman, went into a large dining-room where a three-man orchestra was playing extravagantly and eight or ten people were dancing. He passed down an aisle between tables, skirted the dance-floor, and stopped in front of the bar that occupied one corner of the room. He was alone on the customers' side of the bar.

The bar-tender, a fat man with a spongy nose, said: "Evening, Ned. We ain't been seeing you much lately."

"'Lo, Jimmy. Been behaving. Manhattan."

The bar-tender began to mix the cocktail. The orchestra finished its piece. A woman's voice rose thin and shrill: "I won't stay in the same place with that Beaumont bastard."

Ned Beaumont turned around, leaning back against the edge of the bar. The bar-tender became motionless with the cocktail-shaker in his hand.

Lee Wilshire was standing in the center of the dance-floor glaring at Ned Beaumont. One of her hands was on the forearm of a bulky youth in a blue suit a bit too tight for him. He too was looking at Ned Beaumont, rather stupidly. She said: "He's a no-good bastard and if you don't throw him out I'm going out."

Everyone else in the place was attentively silent.

The youth's face reddened. His attempt at a scowl increased his appearance of embarrassment.



The girl said: "I'll go over and slap him myself if you don't."

Ned Beaumont, smiling, said: "Lo, Lee. Seen Bernie since he got out?"

Lee cursed him and took an angry step forward.

The bulky youth put out a hand and stopped her. "I'll fix him," he said, "the bastard." He adjusted his coat-collar to his neck, pulled the front of his coat down, and stalked off the dance-floor to face Ned Beaumont. "What's the idea?" he demanded. "What's the idea of talking to the little lady like that?"

Ned Beaumont, staring soberly at the youth, stretched his right arm out to the side and laid his hand palm-up on the bar. "Give me something to tap him with, Jimmy," he said. "I don't feel like fist-fighting."

One of the bar-tender's hands was already out of sight beneath the bar. He brought it up holding a small bludgeon and put the bludgeon in Ned Beaumont's hand. Ned Beaumont let it lie there while he said: "She gets called a lot of things. The last guy I saw her with was calling her a dumb cluck."

The youth drew himself up straight, his eyes shifting from side to side. He said: "I won't forget you and some day me and you will meet when there's nobody around." He turned on his heel and addressed Lee Wilshire. "Come on, let's blow out of this dump."

"Go ahead and blow," she said spitefully. "I'll be God-damned if I'm going with you. I'm sick of you."

A thick-bodied man with nearly all gold teeth came up and said: "Yes you will, the both of you. Get."

Ned Beaumont laughed and said: "The-uh-little lady's with me, Corky."

Corky said, "Fair enough," and then to the youth. "Outside, bum." The youth went out.

Lee Wilshire had returned to her table. She sat there with her cheeks between her fists, staring at the cloth.

Ned Beaumont sat down facing her. He said to the waiter: "Jimmy's got a Manhattan that belongs to me. And I want some food. Eaten yet, Lee?"

"Yes," she said without looking up. "I want a silver fizz."

Ned Beaumont said: "Fine. I want a minute steak with mushrooms, whatever vegetable Tony's got that didn't come out of a can, some lettuce and tomatoes with Roquefort dressing, and coffee."

When the waiter had gone Lee said bitterly: "Men are no good, none of them. That big false alarm!" She began to cry silently.

"Maybe you pick the wrong kind," Ned Beaumont suggested.

"You should tell me that," she said, looking up angrily at him, "after the lousy trick you played me."

"I didn't play you any lousy trick," he protested. "If Bernie had to hock your pretties to pay back the money he'd gypped me out of it wasn't my fault."

The orchestra began to play.

"Nothing's ever a man's fault," she complained. "Come on and dance."

"Oh, all right," he said reluctantly.

When they returned to the table his cocktail and her fizz were there. "What's Bernie doing these days?" he asked as they drank.

"I don't know. I haven't seen him since he got out and I don't want to see him. Another swell guy! What breaks I've been getting this year! Him and Taylor and this bastard!"

"Taylor Henry?" he asked.

"Yes, but I didn't have much to do with him," she explained quickly, "because that's while I was living with Bernie."

Ned Beaumont finished his cocktail before he said: "You were just one of the girls who used to meet him in his Charter Street place now and then."

"Yes," she said, looking warily at him.

He said: "I think we ought to have a drink."

She powdered her face while he caught their waiter's attention and ordered their drinks.

#### 4

The door-bell awakened Ned Beaumont. He got drowsily out of bed, coughing a little, and put on kimono and slippers.

It was a few minutes after nine by his alarm-clock. He went to the door.

Janet Henry came in apologizing. "I know it's horribly early, but I simply couldn't wait another minute. I tried and tried to get you on the phone last night and hardly slept a wink because I couldn't. All of Father's sticks are there. So, you see, he lied."

"Has he got a heavy rough brown one?"

"Yes, that's the one Major Sawbridge brought him from Scotland. He never uses it, but it's there." She smiled triumphantly at Ned Beaumont.

He blinked sleepily and ran fingers through his tousled hair. "Then he lied, right enough," he said.

"And," she said gaily, "he was there when I got home last night."

"Paul?"

"Yes. And he asked me to marry him."

Sleepiness went out of Ned Beaumont's eyes. "Did he say anything about our battle?"

"Not a word."

"What did you say?"

"I said it was too soon after Taylor's death for me even to engage myself to him, but I didn't say I wouldn't a little later, so we've got what I believe is called an understanding."

He looked curiously at her.

Gaiety went out of her face. She put a hand on his arm. Her voice broke a little. "Please don't think I'm altogether heartless," she said, "but—oh!—I do so want to—to do what we set out to do that everything else seems—well—not important at all."

He moistened his lips and said in a grave gentle voice: "What a spot he'd be in if you loved him as much as you hate him."

She stamped her foot and cried: "Don't say that! Don't ever say that again!"

Irritable lines appeared in his forehead and his lips tightened together.

She said, "Please," contritely, "but I can't bear that."

"Sorry," he said. "Had breakfast yet?"

"No. I was too anxious to bring my news to you."

"Fine. You'll eat with me. What do you like?" He went to the telephone.

After he had ordered breakfast he went into the bathroom to wash his teeth, face, and hands and brush his hair. When he returned to the living-room she had removed her hat and coat and was standing by the fireplace smoking a cigarette. She started to say something, but stopped when the telephone-bell rang.

He went to the telephone. "Hello. . . . Yes, Harry, I stopped in, but you were out. . . . I wanted to ask you about—you know—the chap you saw with Paul that night. Did he have a hat? . . . He did? Sure? . . . And did he have a stick in his hand? . . . Oke. . . . No, I couldn't do anything with Paul on that, Harry. Better see him yourself. . . . Yes. . . . 'By."

Janet Henry's eyes questioned him as he got up from the telephone.

He said: "That was one of a couple of fellows who claim they saw Paul talking to your brother in the street that night. He says he saw the hat, but not the stick. It was dark, though, and this pair were riding past in a car. I wouldn't bet they saw anything very clearly."

"Why are you so interested in the hat? Is it so important?"

He shrugged. "I don't know. I'm only an amateur detective, but it looks like a thing that might have some meaning, one way or another."

"Have you learned anything else since yesterday?"

"No. I spent part of the evening buying drinks for a girl Taylor used to play around with, but there wasn't anything there."

"Anyone I know?" she asked.

He shook his head, then looked sharply at her and said: "It wasn't Opal, if that's what you're getting at."

"Don't you think we might be able to—to get some information from her?"

"Opal? No. She thinks her father killed Taylor, but she thinks it was on her account. It wasn't anything she knew that sent

her off—not any inside stuff—it was your letters and the *Observer* and things like that.”

Janet Henry nodded, but seemed unconvinced.

Their breakfast arrived.

The telephone-bell rang while they were eating. Ned Beaumont went to the telephone and said: “Hello. . . . Yes, Mom. . . . What?” He listened, frowning, for several seconds, then said: “There isn’t much you can do about it except let them and I don’t think it’ll do any harm. . . . No, I don’t know where he is. . . . I don’t think I will. . . . Well, don’t worry about it, Mom, it’ll be all right. . . . Sure, that’s right. . . . ’By.” He returned to the table smiling. “Farr’s got the same idea you had,” he said as he sat down. “That was Paul’s mother. A man from the District Attorney’s office is there to question Opal.” A bright gleam awakened in his eyes. “She can’t help them any, but they’re closing in on him.”

“Why did she call you?” Janet Henry asked.

“Paul had gone out and she didn’t know where to find him.”

“Doesn’t she know that you and Paul have quarreled?”

“Apparently not.” He put down his fork. “Look here. Are you sure you want to go through with this thing?”

“I want to go through with it more than I ever wanted to do anything in my life,” she told him.

Ned Beaumont laughed bitterly, said: “They’re practically the same words Paul used telling me how much he wanted you.”

She shuddered, her face hardened, and she looked coldly at him.

He said: “I don’t know about you. I’m not sure of you. I had a dream I don’t much like.”

She smiled then. “Surely you don’t believe in dreams?”

He did not smile. “I don’t believe in anything, but I’m too much of a gambler not to be affected by a lot of things.”

Her smile became less mocking. She asked: “What was this dream that makes you mistrust me?” She held up a finger, pretending seriousness. “And then I’ll tell you one I had about you.”

“I was fishing,” he said, “and I caught an enormous fish—a

rainbow trout, but enormous—and you said you wanted to look at it and you picked it up and threw it back in the water before I could stop you.”

She laughed merrily. “What did you do?”

“That was the end of the dream.”

“It was a lie,” she said. “I won’t throw your trout back. Now I’ll tell you mine. I was—” Her eyes widened. “When was yours? The night you came to dinner?”

“No. Last night.”

“Oh, that’s too bad. It would be nicer in an impressive way if we’d done our dreaming on the same night and the same hour and the same minute. Mine was the night you were there. We were—this is in the dream—we were lost in a forest, you and I, tired and starving. We walked and walked till we came to a little house and we knocked on the door, but nobody answered. We tried the door. It was locked. Then we peeped through a window and inside we could see a great big table piled high with all imaginable kinds of food, but we couldn’t get in through either of the windows because they had iron bars over them. So we went back to the door and knocked and knocked again and still nobody answered. Then we thought that sometimes people left their keys under door-mats and we looked and there it was. But when we opened the door we saw hundreds and hundreds of snakes on the floor where we hadn’t been able to see them through the window and they all came sliding and slithering towards us. We slammed the door shut and locked it and stood there frightened to death listening to them hissing and knocking their heads against the inside of the door. Then you said that perhaps if we opened the door and hid from the snakes they’d come out and go away, so we did. You helped me climb up on the roof—it was low in this part of the dream: I don’t remember what it was like before—and you climbed up after me and leaned down and unlocked the door, and all the snakes came slithering out. We lay holding our breath on the roof until the last of the hundreds and hundreds of them had slithered out of sight into the forest. Then we jumped down and ran inside and locked the door and ate and ate and ate

and I woke sitting up in bed clapping my hands and laughing."

"I think you made that up," Ned Beaumont said after a little pause.

"Why?"

"It starts out to be a nightmare and winds up something else and all the dreams I ever had about food ended before I got a chance to do any actual eating."

Janet Henry laughed. "I didn't make all of it up," she said, "but you needn't ask which part is true. You've accused me of lying and I'll tell you nothing now."

"Oh, all right." He picked up his fork again, but did not eat. He asked, with an air of just having the thought: "Does your father know anything? Do you think we could get anything out of him if we went to him with what we know?"

"Yes," she said eagerly, "I do."

He scowled thoughtfully. "The only trouble is he might go up in the air and explode the works before we're ready. He's hot-headed, isn't he?"

Her answer was given reluctantly: "Yes, but"—her face brightened, pleadingly—"I'm sure if we showed him why it's important to wait until we've— But we are ready now, aren't we?"

He shook his head. "Not yet."

She pouted.

"Maybe tomorrow," he said.

"Really?"

"That's not a promise," he cautioned her, "but I think we will be."

She put a hand across the table to take one of his hands. "But you will promise to let me know the very minute we're ready, no matter what time of day or night it is?"

"Sure, I'll promise you that." He looked obliquely at her. "You're not very anxious to be in at the death, are you?"

His tone brought a flush to her face, but she did not lower her eyes. "I know you think I'm a monster," she said. "Perhaps I am."

He looked down at his plate and muttered: "I hope you like it when you get it."

## IX. THE HEELS

### I

After Janet Henry had gone Ned Beaumont went to his telephone, called Jack Rumsen's number, and when he had that one on the wire said: "Can you drop in to see me, Jack? . . . Fine. 'By."

He was dressed by the time Jack arrived. They sat in facing chairs, each with a glass of Bourbon whisky and mineral water, Ned Beaumont smoking a cigar, Jack a cigarette.

Ned Beaumont asked: "Heard anything about the split between Paul and me?"

Jack said, "Yes," casually.

"What do you think of it?"

"Nothing. I remember the last time it was supposed to happen it turned out to be a trick on Shad O'Rory."

Ned Beaumont smiled as if he had expected that reply. "Is that what everybody thinks it is this time?"

The dapper young man said: "A lot of them do."

Ned Beaumont inhaled cigar-smoke slowly, asked: "Suppose I told you it was on the level this time?"

Jack said nothing. His face told nothing of his thoughts.

Ned Beaumont said: "It is." He drank from his glass. "How much do I owe you?"

"Thirty bucks for that job on the Madvig girl. You settled for the rest."

Ned Beaumont took a roll of paper money from a trousers-pocket, separated three ten-dollar bills from the roll, and gave them to Jack.

Jack said: "Thanks."

Ned Beaumont said: "Now we're quits." He inhaled smoke and blew it out while saying: "I've got another job I want done. I'm after Paul's scalp on the Taylor Henry killing. He told me he did it, but I need a little more proof. Want to work on it for me?"

Jack said: "No."



"Why not?"

The dark young man rose to put his empty glass on the table. "Fred and I are building up a nice little private-detective business here," he said. "A couple of years more and we'll be sitting pretty. I like you, Beaumont, but not enough to monkey with the man that runs the city."

Ned Beaumont said evenly: "He's on the chutes. The whole crew's getting ready to ditch him. Farr and Rainey are—"

"Let them do it. I don't want in on that racket and I'll believe they can do it when it's done. Maybe they'll give him a bump or two, but making it stick's another thing. You know him better than I do. You know he's got more guts than all the rest of them put together."

"He has and that's what's licking him. Well, if you won't, you won't."

Jack said, "I won't," and picked up his hat. "Anything else I'll be glad to do, but—" He moved one hand in a brief gesture of finality.

Ned Beaumont stood up. There was no resentment in his manner, none in his voice when he said: "I thought you might feel that way about it." He brushed a side of his mustache with a thumb and stared thoughtfully past Jack. "Maybe you can tell me this: any idea where I can find Shad?"

Jack shook his head. "Since the third time they knocked his place over—when the two coppers were killed—he's been laying low, though they don't seem to have a hell of a lot on him personally." He took his cigarette from his mouth. "Know Whisky Vassos?"

"Yes."

"You might find out from him if you know him well enough. He's around town. You can usually find him some time during the night at Tim Walker's place on Smith Street."

"Thanks, Jack, I'll try that."

"That's all right," Jack said. He hesitated. "I'm sorry as hell you and Madvig split. I wish you—" He broke off and turned towards the door. "You know what you're doing."

Ned Beaumont went down to the District Attorney's office. This time there was no delay in ushering him into Farr's presence.

Farr did not get up from his desk, did not offer to shake hands. He said: "How do you do, Beaumont? Sit down." His voice was coldly polite. His pugnacious face was not so red as usual. His eyes were level and hard.

Ned Beaumont sat down, crossed his legs comfortably, and said: "I wanted to tell you about what happened when I went to see Paul after I left here yesterday."

Farr's "Yes?" was cold and polite.

"I told him how I'd found you-panicky." Ned Beaumont, smiling his nicest smile, went on in the manner of one telling a fairly amusing but unimportant anecdote: "I told him I thought you were trying to get up enough nerve to hang the Taylor Henry murder on him. He believed me at first, but when I told him the only way to save himself was by turning up the real murderer, he said that was no good. He said he was the real murderer though he called it an accident or self-defense or something."

Farr's face had become paler and was stiff around the mouth, but he did not speak.

Ned Beaumont raised his eyebrows. "I'm not boring you, am I?" he asked.

"Go on, continue," the District Attorney said coldly.

Ned Beaumont tilted his chair back. His smile was mocking. "You think I'm kidding, don't you? You think it's a trick we're playing on you." He shook his head and murmured: "You're a timid soul, Farr."

Farr said: "I'm glad to listen to any information you can give me, but I'm very busy, so I'll have to ask you—"

Ned Beaumont laughed then and replied: "Oke. I thought maybe you'd like to have this information in an affidavit or something."

"Very well." Farr pressed one of the pearl buttons on his desk.

A grey-haired woman in green came in.

"Mr. Beaumont wants to dictate a statement," Farr told her.

She said, "Yes, sir," sat at the other side of Farr's desk, put her notebook on the desk, and, holding a silver pencil over the book, looked at Ned Beaumont with blank brown eyes.

He said: "Yesterday afternoon in his office in the Nebel Building, Paul Madvig told me that he had been to dinner at Senator Henry's house the night Taylor Henry was killed; that he and Taylor Henry had some sort of trouble there; that after he left the house Taylor Henry ran after him and caught up with him and tried to hit him with a rough heavy brown walking-stick; that in trying to take the stick from Taylor Henry he accidentally struck him on the forehead with it, knocking him down; and that he carried the stick away with him and burned it. He said his only reason for concealing his part in Taylor Henry's death was his desire to keep it from Janet Henry. That's all of it."

Farr addressed the stenographer: "Transcribe that right away."

She left the office.

Ned Beaumont said: "I thought I was bringing you news that would get you all excited." He sighed. "I thought you'd fairly tear your hair over it."

The District Attorney looked steadily at him.

Ned Beaumont, unabashed, said: "I thought at least you'd have Paul dragged in and confronted with this"—he waved a hand—"‘damaging disclosure’ is a good phrase."

The District Attorney spoke in a restrained tone: "Please permit me to run my own office."

Ned Beaumont laughed again and relapsed into silence until the grey-haired stenographer returned with a typed copy of his statement. Then he asked: "Do I swear to it?"

"No," Farr said, "just sign it. That will be sufficient."

Ned Beaumont signed the paper. "This isn't nearly so much fun as I thought it was going to be," he complained cheerfully.

Farr's undershot jaw tightened. "No," he said with grim satisfaction, "I don't suppose it is."

"You're a timid soul, Farr," Ned Beaumont repeated. "Be

careful about taxis when you cross streets." He bowed. "See you later."

Outside, he grimaced angrily.

That night Ned Beaumont rang the door-bell of a dark three-story house in Smith Street. A short man who had a small head and thick shoulders opened the door half a foot, said, "All right," and opened it the rest of the way.

Ned Beaumont, saying, "Lo," entered, walked twenty feet down a dim hallway past two closed doors on the right, opened a door on the left, and went down a wooden flight of steps into a basement where there was a bar and where a radio was playing softly.

Beyond the bar was a frosted glass door marked *Toilet*. This door opened and a man came out a swarthy man with something apish in the slope of his big shoulders, the length of his thick arms, the flatness of his face, and the curve of his bowed legs—Jeff Gardner.

He saw Ned Beaumont and his reddish small eyes glistened. "Well, blind Christ, if it ain't Sock-me-again Beaumont!" he roared, showing his beautiful teeth in a huge grin.

Ned Beaumont said, "Lo, Jeff," while everyone in the place looked at them.

Jeff swaggered over to Ned Beaumont, threw his left arm roughly around his shoulders, seized Ned Beaumont's right hand with his right hand, and addressed the company jovially: "This is the swellest guy I ever skinned a knuckle on and I've skinned them on plenty." He dragged Ned Beaumont to the bar. "We're all going to have a little drink and then I'll show you how it's done. By Jesus, I will!" He leered into Ned Beaumont's face. "What do you say to that, my lad?"

Ned Beaumont, looking stolidly at the ugly dark face so close to, though lower than, his, said: "Scotch."

Jeff laughed delightedly and addressed the company again: "You see, he likes it. He's a—" he hesitated, frowning, wet his

lips "—a God-damned massacrast, that's what he is." He leered at Ned Beaumont. "You know what a massacrast is?"

"Yes."

Jeff seemed disappointed. "Rye," he told the bar-tender. When their drinks were set before them he released Ned Beaumont's hand, though he kept his arm across his shoulders. They drank. Jeff set down his glass and put his hand on Ned Beaumont's wrist. "I got just the place for me and you upstairs," he said, "a room that's too little for you to fall down in. I can bounce you around off the walls. That way we won't be wasting a lot of time while you're getting up off the floor."

Ned Beaumont said: "I'll buy a drink."

"That ain't a dumb idea," Jeff agreed.

They drank again.

When Ned Beaumont had paid for the drinks Jeff turned him towards the stairs. "Excuse us, gents," he said to the others at the bar, "but we got to go up and rehearse our act." He patted Ned Beaumont's shoulder. "Me and my sweetheart."

They climbed two flights of steps and went into a small room in which a sofa, two tables, and half a dozen chairs were crowded. There were some empty glasses and plates holding the remains of sandwiches on one table.

Jeff peered near-sightedly around the room and demanded: "Now where in hell did she go?" He released Ned Beaumont's wrist, took the arm from around his shoulders, and asked: "You don't see no broad here, do you?"

"No."

Jeff wagged his head up and down emphatically. "She's gone," he said. He took an uncertain step backwards and jabbed the bell-button beside the door with a dirty finger. Then, flourishing his hand, he made a grotesque bow and said: "Set down."

Ned Beaumont sat down at the less disorderly of the two tables.

"Set in any God-damned chair you want to set in," Jeff said with another large gesture. "If you don't like that one, take another. I want you to consider yourself my guest and the hell with you if you don't like it."

"It's a swell chair," Ned Beaumont said.

"It's a hell of a chair," Jeff said. "There ain't a chair in the dump that's worth a damn. Look." He picked up a chair and tore one of its front legs out. "You call that a swell chair? Listen, Beaumont, you don't know a damned thing about chairs." He put the chair down, tossed the leg on the sofa. "You can't fool me. I know what you're up to. You think I'm drunk, don't you?"

Ned Beaumont grinned. "No, you're not drunk."

"The hell I'm not drunk. I'm drunker than you are. I'm drunker than anybody in this dump. I'm drunk as hell and don't think I'm not, but—" He held up a thick unclean forefinger.

A waiter came in the doorway asking: "What is it, gents?"

Jeff turned to confront him. "Where've you been? Sleeping? I rung for you one hour ago."

The waiter began to say something.

Jeff said: "I bring the best friend I got in the world up here for a drink and what the hell happens? We have to sit around a whole God-damned hour waiting for a lousy waiter. No wonder he's sore at me."

"What do you want?" the waiter asked indifferently.

"I want to know where in hell the girl that was in here went to."

"Oh, her? She's gone."

"Gone where?"

"I don't know."

Jeff scowled. "Well, you find out, and God-damned quick. What's the idea of not knowing where she went? If this ain't a swell joint where nobody—" A shrewd light came into his red eyes. "I'll tell you what to do. You go up to the ladies' toilet and see if she's there."

"She ain't there," the waiter said. "She went out."

"The dirty bastard!" Jeff said and turned to Ned Beaumont. "What'd you do to a dirty bastard like that? I bring you up here because I want you to meet her because I know you'll like her and she'll like you and she's too God-damned snotty to meet my friends and out she goes."

Ned Beaumont was lighting a cigar. He did not say anything.

Jeff scratched his head, growled, "Well, bring us something to drink, then," sat down across the table from Ned Beaumont, and said savagely: "Mine's rye."

Ned Beaumont said: "Scotch."

The waiter went away.

Jeff glared at Ned Beaumont. "Don't get the idea that I don't know what you're up to, either," he said angrily.

"I'm not up to anything," Ned Beaumont replied carelessly. "I'd like to see Shad and I thought maybe I'd find Whisky Vassos here and he'd send me to Shad."

"Don't you think I know where Shad is?"

"You ought to."

"Then why didn't you ask me?"

"All right. Where is he?"

Jeff slapped the table mightily with an open hand and bawled: "You're a liar. You don't give a God-damn where Shad is. It's me you're after."

Ned Beaumont smiled and shook his head.

"It is," the apish man insisted. "You know God-damned well that—"

A young-middle-aged man with plump red lips and round eyes came to the door. He said: "Cut it out, Jeff. You're making more noise than everybody else in the place."

Jeff screwed himself around in his chair. "It's this bastard," he told the man in the doorway, indicating Ned Beaumont with a jerk of his thumb. "He thinks I don't know what he's up to. I know what he's up to. He's a heel and that's what he is. And I'm going to beat hell out of him and that's what I'm going to do."

The man in the doorway said reasonably, "Well, you don't have to make so much noise about it," winked at Ned Beaumont, and went away.

Jeff said gloomily: "Tim's turning into a heel too." He spit on the floor.

The waiter came in with their drinks.

Ned Beaumont raised his glass, said, "Looking at you," and drank.

Jeff said: "I don't want to look at you. You're a heel." He stared somberly at Ned Beaumont.

"You're crazy."

"You're a liar. I'm drunk. But I ain't so drunk that I don't know what you're up to." He emptied his glass, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. "And I say you're a heel."

Ned Beaumont, smiling amiably, said: "All right. Have it your way."

Jeff thrust his apish muzzle forward a little. "You think you're smart as hell, don't you?"

Ned Beaumont did not say anything.

"You think it's a damned smart trick coming in here and trying to get me plastered so you can turn me up."

"That's right," Ned Beaumont said carelessly, "there is a murder-charge against you for bumping off Francis West, isn't there?"

Jeff said: "Hell with Francis West."

Ned Beaumont shrugged. "I didn't know him."

Jeff said: "You're a heel."

Ned Beaumont said: "I'll buy a drink."

The apish man nodded solemnly and tilted his chair back to reach the bell-button. With his finger on the button he said: "But you're still a heel." His chair swayed back under him, turning. He got his feet flat on the floor and brought the chair down on all fours before it could spill him. "The bastard!" he snarled, pulling it around to the table again. He put his elbows on the table and propped his chin up on one fist. "What the hell do I care who turns me up? You don't think they'd ever fry me, do you?"

"Why not?"

"Why not? Jesus! I wouldn't have to stand the rap till after election and then it's all Shad's."

"Maybe."

"Maybe hell!"

The waiter came in and they ordered their drinks.



"Maybe Shad would let you take the fall anyhow," Ned Beaumont said idly when they were alone again. "Things like that have happened."

"A swell chance," Jeff scoffed, "with all I've got on him."

Ned Beaumont exhaled cigar-smoke. "What've you got on him?"

The apish man laughed, boisterously, scornfully, and pounded the table with an open hand. "Christ!" he roared, "he thinks I'm drunk enough to tell him."

From the doorway came a quiet voice, a musical slightly Irish barytone: "Go on, Jeff, tell him." Shad O'Rory stood in the doorway. His grey-blue eyes looked somewhat sadly at Jeff.

Jeff squinted his eyes merrily at the man in the doorway and said: "How are you, Shad? Come in and set down to a drink. Meet Mr. Beaumont. He's a heel."

O'Rory said softly: "I told you to stay under cover."

"But, Jesus, Shad, I was getting so's I was afraid I'd bite myself! And this joint's under cover, ain't it? It's a speakeasy."

O'Rory looked a moment longer at Jeff, then at Ned Beaumont. "Good evening, Beaumont."

"Lo, Shad."

O'Rory smiled gently and, indicating Jeff with a tiny nod, asked: "Get much out of him?"

"Not much I didn't already know," Ned Beaumont replied. "He makes a lot of noise, but all of it doesn't make sense."

Jeff said: "I think you're a pair of heels."

The waiter arrived with their drinks. O'Rory stopped him. "Never mind. They've had enough." The waiter carried their drinks away. Shad O'Rory came into the room and shut the door. He stood with his back against it. He said: "You talk too much, Jeff. I've told you that before."

Ned Beaumont deliberately winked at Jeff.

Jeff said angrily to him: "What the hell's the matter with you?"

Ned Beaumont laughed.

"I'm talking to you, Jeff." O'Rory said.

"Christ, don't I know it?"

O'Rory said: "We're coming to the place where I'm going to stop talking to you."

Jeff stood up. "Don't be a heel, Shad," he said. "What the hell?" He came around the table. "Me and you've been pals a long time. You always were my pal and I'll always be yours." He put his arms out to embrace O'Rory, lurching towards him. "Sure, I'm smoked, but--"

O'Rory put a white hand on the apish man's chest and thrust him back. "Sit down." He did not raise his voice.

Jeff's left fist whipped out at O'Rory's face.

O'Rory's head moved to the right, barely enough to let the fist whip past his cheek. O'Rory's long finely sculptured face was gravely composed. His right hand dropped down behind his hip.

Ned Beaumont flung from his chair at O'Rory's right arm, caught it with both hands, going down on his knees.

Jeff, thrown against the wall by the impetus behind his left fist, now turned and took Shad O'Rory's throat in both hands. The apish face was yellow, distorted, hideous. There was no longer any drunkenness in it.

"Got the roscoe?" Jeff panted.

"Yes." Ned Beaumont stood up, stepped back holding a black pistol leveled at O'Rory.

O'Rory's eyes were glassy, protuberant, his face mottled, turgid. He did not struggle against the man holding his throat.

Jeff turned his head over his shoulder to grin at Ned Beaumont. The grin was wide, genuine, idiotically bestial. Jeff's little red eyes glinted merrily. He said in a hoarse good-natured voice: "Now you see what we got to do. We got to give him the works."

Ned Beaumont said: "I don't want anything to do with it." His voice was steady. His nostrils quivered.

"Nor" Jeff leered at him. "I expect you think Shad's a guy that'll forget what we done." He ran his tongue over his lips. "He'll forget. I'll fix that."

Griming from ear to ear at Ned Beaumont, not looking at the man whose throat he held in his hands, Jeff began to take

in and let out long slow breaths. His coat became lumpy over his shoulders and back and along his arms. Sweat appeared on his ugly dark face.

Ned Beaumont was pale. He too was breathing heavily and moisture filmed his temples. He looked over Jeff's lumpy shoulder at O'Rory's face.

O'Rory's face was liver-colored. His eyes stood far out, blind. His tongue came out blue between bluish lips. His slender body writhed. One of his hands began to beat the wall behind him, mechanically, without force.

Grinning at Ned Beaumont, not looking at the man whose throat he held, Jeff spread his legs a little wider and arched his back. O'Rory's hand stopped beating the wall. There was a muffled crack, then, almost immediately, a sharper one. O'Rory did not writhe now. He sagged in Jeff's hands.

Jeff laughed in his throat. "That's keno," he said. He kicked a chair out of the way and dropped O'Rory's body on the sofa. O'Rory's body fell there face down, one hand and his feet hanging down to the floor. Jeff rubbed his hands on his hips and faced Ned Beaumont. "I'm just a big good-natured slob," he said. "Anybody can kick me around all they want to and I never do nothing about it."

Ned Beaumont said: "You were afraid of him."

Jeff laughed. "I hope to tell you I was. So was anybody that was in their right mind. I suppose you wasn't?" He laughed again, looked around the room, said: "Let's screw before anybody pops in." He held out his hand. "Give me the roscoe. I'll ditch it."

Ned Beaumont said: "No." He moved his hand sidewise until the pistol was pointed at Jeff's belly. "We can say this was self-defense. I'm with you. We can beat it at the inquest."

"Jesus, that's a bright idea!" Jeff exclaimed. "Me with a murder-rape hanging over me for that West guy!" His small red eyes kept shifting their focus from Ned Beaumont's face to the pistol in his hand.

Ned Beaumont smiled with thin pale lips. "That's what I was thinking about," he said softly.

"Don't be a God-damned sap," Jeff blustered, taking a step forward. "You—"

Ned Beaumont backed away, around one of the tables. "I don't mind plugging you, Jeff," he said. "Remember I owe you something."

Jeff stood still and scratched the back of his head. "What kind of a heel are you?" he asked perplexedly.

"Just a pal." Ned Beaumont moved the pistol forward suddenly. "Sit down."

Jeff, after a moment's glowering hesitation, sat down.

Ned Beaumont put out his left hand and pressed the bell-button. Jeff stood up.

Ned Beaumont said: "Sit down."

Jeff sat down.

Ned Beaumont said: "Keep your hands on the table."

Jeff shook his head lugubriously. "What a half-smart bastard you turned out to be," he said. "You don't think they're going to let you drag me out of here, do you?"

Ned Beaumont went around the table again and sat on a chair facing Jeff and facing the door.

Jeff said: "The best thing for you to do is give me that gun and hope I'll forget you made the break. Jesus, Ned, this is one of my hang-outs! You ain't got a chance in the world of pulling a fast one here."

Ned Beaumont said: "Keep your hand away from the catchup-bottle."

The waiter opened the door, goggled at them.

"Tell Tim to come up," Ned Beaumont said, and then, to the apish man when he would have spoken: "Shut up."

The waiter shut the door and hurried away.

Jeff said: "Don't be a sap, Neddy. This can't get you anything but a rub-out. What good's it going to do you to try to turn me up? None." He wet his lips with his tongue. "I know you're kind of sore about the time we were rough with you, but-helll—that wasn't my fault. I was just doing what Shad told me, and ain't I evened that up now by knocking him off for you?"

Ned Beaumont said: "If you don't keep your hand away from that catchup-bottle I'm going to shoot a hole in it."

Jeff said: "You're a heel."

The young-middle-aged man with plump lips and round eyes opened the door, came in quickly, and shut it behind him.

Ned Beaumont said: "Jeff's killed O'Rory. Phone the police. You'll have time to clear the place before they get here. Better get a doctor, too, in case he's not dead."

Jeff laughed scornfully. "If he ain't dead I'm the Pope." He stopped laughing and addressed the plump-mouthed man with careless familiarity: "What do you think of this guy thinking you're going to let him get away with that? Tell him what a fat chance he has of getting away with it, Tim."

Tim looked at the dead man on the sofa, at Jeff, and at Ned Beaumont. His round eyes were sober. He spoke to Ned Beaumont, slowly: "This is a tough break for the house. Can't we drag him out in the street and let him be found there?"

Ned Beaumont shook his head. "Get your place cleaned up before the coppers get here and you'll be all right. I'll do what I can for you."

While Tim hesitated Jeff said: "Listen, Tim, you know me. You know—"

Tim said without especial warmth: "For Christ's sake pipe down."

Ned Beaumont smiled. "Nobody knows you, Jeff, now Shad's dead."

"No?" The apish man sat back more comfortably in his chair and his face cleared. "Well, turn me up. Now I know what kind of sons of bitches you are I'd rather take the fall than ask a God-damned thing of either of you."

Tim, ignoring Jeff, asked: "Have to play it that way?"

Ned Beaumont nodded.

"I guess I can stand it," Tim said and put his hand on the door-knob.

"Mind seeing if Jeff's got a gun on him?" Ned Beaumont asked.

Tim shook his head. "It happened here, but I've got nothing

to do with it and I'm going to have nothing to do with it," he said and went out.

Jeff, slouching back comfortably in his chair, his hands idle on the edge of the table before him, talked to Ned Beaumont until the police came. He talked cheerfully, calling Ned Beaumont numerous profane and obscene and merely insulting names, accusing him of a long and varied list of vices.

Ned Beaumont listened with polite interest.

A raw-boned white-haired man in a lieutenant's uniform was the first policeman to come in. Half a dozen police detectives were behind him.

Ned Beaumont said: "'Lo, Brett. I think he's got a gun on him."

"What's it all about?" Brett asked, looking at the body on the sofa while two of the detectives, squeezing past him, took hold of Jeff Gardner.

Ned Beaumont told Brett what had happened. His story was truthful except in giving the impression that O'Rory had been killed in the heat of their struggle and not after he had been disarmed.

While Ned Beaumont was talking a doctor came in, turned Shad O'Rory's body over on the sofa, examined him briefly, and stood up. The Lieutenant looked at the doctor. The doctor said, "Gone," and went out of the small crowded room.

Jeff was jovially cursing the two detectives who held him. Every time he cursed, one of the detectives struck him in the face with his fist. Jeff laughed and kept on cursing them. His false teeth had been knocked out. His mouth bled.

Ned Beaumont gave the dead man's pistol to Brett and stood up. "Want me to come along to headquarters now? Or will tomorrow do?"

"Better come along now," Brett replied.

4

It was long past midnight when Ned Beaumont left police headquarters. He said good-night to the two reporters who had come out with him and got into a taxicab. The address he gave the driver was Paul Madvig's.

Lights were on in the ground-floor of Madvig's house and as Ned Beaumont climbed the front steps the door was opened by Mrs. Madvig. She was dressed in black and had a shawl over her shoulders.

He said: "Lo, Mom. What are you doing up so late?"

She said, "I thought it was Paul," though she looked at him without disappointment.

"Isn't he home? I wanted to see him." He looked sharply at her. "What's the matter?"

The old woman stepped back, pulling the door back with her. "Come in, Ned."

He went in.

She shut the door and said: "Opal tried to commit suicide."

He lowered his eyes and mumbled: "What? What do you mean?"

"She had cut one of her wrists before the nurse could stop her. She didn't lose much blood, though, and she's all right if she doesn't try it again." There was as little of weakness in her voice as in her mien.

Ned Beaumont's voice was not steady. "Where's Paul?"

"I don't know. We haven't been able to find him. He ought to be home before this. I don't know where he is." She put a bony hand on Ned Beaumont's upper arm and now her voice shook a little. "Are you—are you and Paul—?" She stopped, squeezing his arm.

He shook his head. "That's done for good."

"Oh, Ned, boy, isn't there anything you can do to patch it up? You and he—" Again she broke off.

He raised his head and looked at her. His eyes were wet. He said gently: "No, Mom, that's done for good. Did he tell you about it?"

"He only told me, when I said I'd phoned you about that man from the District Attorney's office being here, that I wasn't ever to do anything like that again, that you—that you were not friends now."

Ned Beaumont cleared his throat. "Listen, Mom, tell him I came to see him. Tell him I'm going home and will wait there

for him, will be waiting all night." He cleared his throat again and added lamely: "Tell him that."

Mrs. Madvig put her bony hands on his shoulders. "You're a good boy, Ned. I don't want you and Paul to quarrel. You're the best friend he ever had, no matter what's come between you. What is it? Is it that Janet-?"

"Ask Paul," he said in a low bitter voice. He moved his head impatiently. "I'm going to run along, Mom, unless there's something I can do for you or Opal. Is there?"

"Not unless you'd go up to see her. She's not sleeping yet and maybe it would do some good to talk to her. She used to listen to you."

He shook his head. "No," he said, "she wouldn't want to see me"—he swallowed—"either."

## X. THE SHATTERED KEY

### I

Ned Beaumont went home. He drank coffee, smoked, read a newspaper, a magazine, and half a book. Now and then he stopped reading to walk, fidgeting, around his rooms. His door-bell did not ring. His telephone-bell did not ring.

At eight o'clock in the morning he bathed, shaved, and put on fresh clothes. Then he had breakfast sent in and ate it.

At nine o'clock he went to the telephone, called Janet Henry's number, asked for her, and said: "Good morning. . . . Yes, fine, thanks. . . . Well, we're ready for the fireworks. . . . Yes. . . . If your father's there suppose we let him in on the whole thing first. . . . Fine, but not a word till I get there. . . . As soon as I can make it. I'm leaving now. . . . Right. See you in minutes."

He got up from the telephone staring into space, clapped his hands together noisily, and rubbed their palms together. His mouth was a sullen line under his mustache, his eyes hot brown points. He went to the closet and briskly put on his overcoat and hat. He left his room whistling *Little Lost Lady* between his teeth and took long steps through the streets.



"Miss Henry's expecting me," he said to the maid who opened the Henrys' door.

She said, "Yes, sir," and guided him to a sunny bright-papered room where the Senator and his daughter were at breakfast.

Janet Henry jumped up immediately and came to him with both hands out, crying excitedly: "Good morning!"

The Senator rose in more leisurely manner, looking with polite surprise at his daughter, then holding his hand out to Ned Beaumont, saying: "Good morning, Mr. Beaumont. I'm very glad to see you. Won't you-?"

"Thanks, no, I've had breakfast."

Janet Henry was trembling. Excitement had drained her skin of color, had darkened her eyes, giving her the appearance of one drugged. "We have something to tell you, Father," she said in a strained uneven voice, "something that-" She turned abruptly to Ned Beaumont. "Tell him! Tell him!"

Ned Beaumont glanced obliquely at her, drawing his brows together, then looked directly at her father. The Senator had remained standing by his place at the table. Ned Beaumont said: "What we've got is pretty strong evidence—including a confession—that Paul Madvig killed your son."

The Senator's eyes became narrower and he put a hand flat on the table in front of him. "What is this pretty strong evidence?" he asked.

"Well, sir, the chief thing is the confession, of course. He says your son ran out after him that night and tried to hit him with a rough brown walking-stick and that in taking the stick away from your son he accidentally struck him with it. He says he took the stick away and burned it, but your daughter"—he made a little bow at Janet Henry—"says it's still here."

"It is," she said. "It's the one Major Sawbridge brought you."

The Senator's face was pale as marble and as firm. "Proceed," he said.

Ned Beaumont made a small gesture with one hand. "Well, sir, that would blow up his story about its being an accident or self-defense—your son's not having the stick." He moved his shoulders a little. "I told Farr this yesterday. He's apparently

afraid to take many chances—you know what he is—but I don't see how he can keep from picking Paul up today."

Janet Henry frowned at Ned Beaumont, obviously perplexed by something, started to speak, but pressed her lips together instead.

Senator Henry touched his lips with the napkin he held in his left hand, dropped the napkin on the table, and asked: "Is there—ah—any other evidence?"

Ned Beaumont's reply was another question carelessly uttered: "Isn't that enough?"

"But there is still more, isn't there?" Janet demanded.

"Stuff to back this up," Ned Beaumont said depreciatively. He addressed the Senator: "I can give you more details, but you've got the main story now. That's enough, isn't it?"

"Quite enough," the Senator said. He put a hand to his forehead. "I cannot believe it, yet it is so. If you'll excuse me for a moment and"—to his daughter—"you too, my dear, I should like to be alone, to think, to adjust myself to— No, no, stay here. I should like to go to my room." He bowed gracefully. "Please remain, Mr. Beaumont. I shall not be long—merely a moment to—to adjust myself to the knowledge that this man with whom I've worked shoulder to shoulder is my son's murderer."

He bowed again and went out, carrying himself rigidly erect.

Ned Beaumont put a hand on Janet Henry's wrist and asked in a low tense voice: "Look here, is he likely to fly off the handle?"

She looked at him, startled.

"Is he likely to go dashing off hunting for Paul?" he explained. "We don't want that. There's no telling what would happen."

"I don't know," she said.

He grimaced impatiently. "We can't let him do it. Can't we go somewhere near the front door so we can stop him if he tries it?"

"Yes." She was frightened.

She led him to the front of the house, into a small room that

was dim behind heavily curtained windows. Its door was within a few feet of the street-door. They stood close together in the dim room, close to the door that stood some six inches ajar. Both of them were trembling. Janet Henry tried to whisper to Ned Beaumont, but he sh-h-hed her into silence.

They were not there long before soft footfalls sounded on the hall-carpet and Senator Henry, wearing hat and overcoat, hurried towards the street-door.

Ned Beaumont stepped out and said: "Wait, Senator Henry."

The Senator turned. His face was hard and cold, his eyes imperious. "You will please excuse me," he said. "I must go out."

"That's no good," Ned Beaumont said. He went up close to the Senator. "Just more trouble."

Janet Henry went to her father's side. "Don't go, Father," she begged. "Listen to Mr. Beaumont."

"I have listened to Mr. Beaumont," the Senator said. "I'm perfectly willing to listen to him again if he has any more information to give me. Otherwise I must ask you to excuse me." He smiled at Ned Beaumont. "It is on what you told me that I'm acting now."

Ned Beaumont regarded him with level eyes. "I don't think you ought to go to see him," he said.

The Senator looked haughtily at Ned Beaumont.

Janet said, "But, Father," before the look in his eyes stopped her.

Ned Beaumont cleared his throat. Spots of color were in his cheeks. He put his left hand out quickly and touched Senator Henry's right-hand overcoat-pocket.

Senator Henry stepped back indignantly.

Ned Beaumont nodded as if to himself. "That's no good at all," he said earnestly. He looked at Janet Henry. "He's got a gun in his pocket."

"Father!" she cried and put a hand to her mouth.

Ned Beaumont pursed his lips. "Well," he told the Senator, "it's a cinch we can't let you go out of here with a gun in your pocket."

Janet Henry said: "Don't let him, Ned."

The Senator's eyes burned scornfully at them. "I think both of you have quite forgotten yourselves," he said. "Janet, you will please go to your room."

She took two reluctant steps away, then halted and cried: "I won't! I won't let you do it. Don't let him, Ned."

Ned Beaumont moistened his lips. "I won't," he promised.

The Senator, staring coldly at him, put his right hand on the street-door's knob.

Ned Beaumont leaned forward and put a hand over the Senator's. "Look here, sir," he said respectfully, "I can't let you do this. I'm not just interfering." He took his hand off the Senator's, felt in the inside pocket of his coat, and brought out a torn, creased, and soiled piece of folded paper. "Here's my appointment as special investigator for the District Attorney's office last month." He held it out to the Senator. "It's never been cancelled as far as I know, so"—he shrugged—"I can't let you go off to shoot somebody."

The Senator did not look at the paper. He said contemptuously: "You are trying to save your murderous friend's life."

"You know that isn't so."

The Senator drew himself up. "Enough of this," he said and turned the door-knob.

Ned Beaumont said: "Step on the sidewalk with that gun in your pocket and I'll arrest you."

Janet Henry wailed: "Oh, Father!"

The Senator and Ned Beaumont stood staring into each other's eyes, both breathing audibly.

The Senator was the first to speak. He addressed his daughter: "Will you leave us for a few minutes, my dear? There are things I should like to say to Mr. Beaumont."

She looked questioningly at Ned Beaumont. He nodded. "Yes," she told her father, "if you won't go out before I've seen you again."

He smiled and said: "You shall see me."

The two men watched her walk away down the hall, turn to

the left with a glance thrown back at them, and vanish through a doorway.

The Senator said ruefully: "I'm afraid you've not had so good an influence on my daughter as you should. She isn't usually so—ah—head-strong."

Ned Beaumont smiled apologetically, but did not speak.

The Senator asked: "How long has this been going on?"

"You mean our digging into the murder? Only a day or two for me. Your daughter's been at it from the beginning. She's always thought Paul did it."

"What?" The Senator's mouth remained open.

"She's always thought he did it. Didn't you know? She hates him like poison—always has."

"Hates him?" the Senator gasped. "My God, no!"

Ned Beaumont nodded and smiled curiously at the man against the door. "Didn't you know that?"

The Senator blew his breath out sharply. "Come in here," he said and led the way into the dim room where Ned Beaumont and Janet Henry had hidden. The Senator switched on the lights while Ned Beaumont was shutting the door. Then they faced one another, both standing.

"I want to talk to you as man to man, Mr. Beaumont," the Senator began. "We can forget your"—he smiled—"official connections, can't we?"

Ned Beaumont nodded. "Yes. Farr's probably forgotten them too."

"Exactly. Now, Mr. Beaumont, I am not a blood-thirsty man, but I'm damned if I can bear the thought of my son's murderer walking around free and unpunished when—"

"I told you they'll have to pick him up. They can't get out of it. The evidence is too strong and everybody knows it."

The Senator smiled again, icily. "You are surely not trying to tell me, as one practicing politician to another, that Paul Madvig is in any danger of being punished for anything he might do in this city?"

"I am. Paul's sunk. They're double-crossing him. The only thing that's holding them up is that they're used to jumping

when he cracks the whip and they need a little time to gather courage."

Senator Henry smiled and shook his head. "You'll allow me to disagree with you? And to point out the fact that I've been in politics more years than you've lived?"

"Sure."

"Then I can assure you that they never will get the necessary amount of courage, no matter how much time they're given. Paul is their boss and, despite possible temporary rebellions, he will remain their boss."

"It doesn't look like we'll agree on that," Ned Beaumont said. "Paul's sunk." He frowned. "Now about this gun business. That's no good. You'd better give it to me." He held out his hand.

The Senator put his right hand in his overcoat-pocket.

Ned Beaumont stepped close to the Senator and put his left hand on the Senator's wrist. "Give me it."

The Senator glared angrily at him.

"All right," Ned Beaumont said, "if I've got to do that," and, after a brief struggle in which a chair was upset, took the weapon—an old-fashioned nicked revolver—away from the Senator. He was thrusting the revolver into one of his hip-pockets when Janet Henry, wild of eye, white of face, came in.

"What is it?" she cried.

"He won't listen to reason," Ned Beaumont grumbled. "I had to take the gun away from him."

The Senator's face was twitching and he panted hoarsely. He took a step towards Ned Beaumont. "Get out of my house," he ordered.

"I won't," Ned Beaumont said. The ends of his lips jerked. Anger began to burn in his eyes. He put a hand out and touched Janet Henry's arm roughly. "Sit down and listen to this. You asked for it and you're going to get it." He spoke to the Senator: "I've got a lot to say, so maybe you'd better sit down too."

Neither Janet Henry nor her father sat down. She looked at

Ned Beaumont with wide panic-stricken eyes, he with hard wary ones. Their faces were similarly white.

Ned Beaumont said to the Senator: "You killed your son."

Nothing changed in the Senator's face. He did not move.

For a long moment Janet Henry was still as her father. Then a look of utter horror came into her face and she sat down slowly on the floor. She did not fall. She slowly bent her knees and sank down on the floor in a sitting position, leaning to the right, her right hand on the floor for support, her horrified face turned up to her father and Ned Beaumont.

Neither of the men looked at her.

Ned Beaumont said to the Senator: "You want to kill Paul now so he can't say you killed your son. You know you can kill him and get away with it—dashing gentleman of the old school stuff—if you can put over on the world the attitude you tried to put over on us." He stopped.

The Senator said nothing.

Ned Beaumont went on: "You know he's going to stop covering you up if he's arrested, because he's not going to have Janet thinking he killed her brother if he can help it." He laughed bitterly. "And what a swell joke on him that is!" He ran fingers through his hair. "What happened is something like this: when Taylor heard about Paul kissing Janet he ran after him, taking the stick with him and wearing a hat, though that's not as important. When you thought of what might happen to your chances of being re-elected—"

The Senator interrupted him in a hoarse angry tone: "This is nonsense! I will not have my daughter subjected—"

Ned Beaumont laughed brutally. "Sure it's nonsense," he said. "And your bringing the stick you killed him with back home, and wearing his hat because you'd run out bare-headed after him, is nonsense too, but it's nonsense that'll nail you to the cross."

Senator Henry said in a low scornful voice: "And what of Paul's confession?"

Ned Beaumont grinned. "Plenty of it," he said. "I tell you what let's do. Janet, you phone him and ask him to come over

right away. Then we'll tell him about your father starting after him with a gun and see what he says."

Janet stirred, but did not rise from the floor. Her face was blank.

Her father said: "That is ridiculous. We will do nothing of the sort."

Ned Beaumont said peremptorily: "Phone him, Janet."

She got up on her feet, still blank of face, and, paying no attention to the Senator's sharp "Janet!" went to the door.

The Senator changed his tone then and said, "Wait, dear," to her and, "I should like to speak to you alone again," to Ned Beaumont.

"All right," Ned Beaumont said, turning to the girl hesitating in the doorway.

Before he could speak to her she was saying stubbornly: "I want to hear it. I've a right to hear it."

He nodded, looked at her father again, and said: "She has."

"Janet, dear," the Senator said, "I'm trying to spare you. I—"

"I don't want to be spared," she said in a small flat voice.

"I want to know."

The Senator turned his palms out in a defeated gesture. "Then I shall say nothing."

Ned Beaumont said: "Phone Paul, Janet."

Before she could move the Senator spoke: "No. This is more difficult than it should be made for me, but—" He took out a handkerchief and wiped his hands. "I am going to tell you exactly what happened and then I am going to ask a favor of you, one I think you cannot refuse. However—" He broke off to look at his daughter. "Come in, my dear, and close the door, if you must hear it."

She shut the door and sat on a chair near it, leaning forward, her body stiff, her face tense.

The Senator put his hands behind him, the handkerchief still in them, and, looking without enmity at Ned Beaumont, said: "I ran out after Taylor that night because I did not care to lose Paul's friendship through my son's hot-headedness. I caught up with them in China Street. Paul had taken the stick from him.



They were, or at least Taylor was, quarreling hotly. I asked Paul to leave us, to leave me to deal with my son, and he did so, giving me the stick. Taylor spoke to me as no son should speak to a father and tried to thrust me out of his way so he could pursue Paul again. I don't know exactly how it happened—the blow—but it happened and he fell and struck his head on the curb. Paul came back then—he hadn't gone far—and we found that Taylor had died instantly. Paul insisted that we leave him there and not admit our part in his death. He said no matter how unavoidable it was a nasty scandal could be made of it in the coming campaign and—well—I let him persuade me. It was he who picked up Taylor's hat and gave it to me to wear home—I had run out bareheaded. He assured me that the police investigation would be stopped if it threatened to come too near us. Later—last week, in fact—when I had become alarmed by the rumors that he had killed Taylor, I went to him and asked him if we hadn't better make a clean breast of it. He laughed at my fears and assured me he was quite able to take care of himself." He brought his hands from behind him, wiped his face with the handkerchief, and said: "That is what happened."

His daughter cried out in a choking voice: "You let him lie there, like that, in the street!"

He winced, but did not say anything.

Ned Beaumont, after a moment's frowning silence, said: "A campaign-speech—some truth gaudied up." He grimaced. "You had a favor to ask."

The Senator looked down at the floor, then up at Ned Beaumont again. "But that is for your ear alone."

Ned Beaumont said: "No."

"Forgive me, dear," the Senator said to his daughter, then to Ned Beaumont: "I have told you the truth, but I realize fully the position I have put myself in. The favor I ask is the return of my revolver and five minutes—a minute—alone in this room."

Ned Beaumont said: "No."

The Senator swayed with a hand to his breast, the handkerchief hanging down from his hand.

Ned Beaumont said: "You'll take what's coming to you."

Ned Beaumont went to the street-door with Farr, his grey-haired stenographer, two police-detectives, and the Senator.

"Not going along?" Farr asked.

"No, but I'll be seeing you."

Farr pumped his hand up and down with enthusiasm. "Make it sooner and oftener, Ned," he said. "You play tricks on me, but I don't hold that against you when I see what comes of them."

Ned Beaumont grinned at him, exchanged nods with the detectives, bowed to the stenographer, and shut the door. He walked upstairs to the white-walled room where the piano was. Janet Henry rose from the lyre-end sofa when he came in.

"They've gone," he said in a consciously matter-of-fact voice.

"Did-did they-?"

"They got a pretty complete statement out of him—more details than he told us."

"Will you tell men the truth about it?"

"Yes," he promised.

"What—" She broke off. "What will they do to him, Ned?"

"Probably not a great deal. His age and prominence and so on will help him. The chances are they'll convict him of manslaughter and then set the sentence aside or suspend it."

"Do you think it was an accident?"

Ned Beaumont shook his head. His eyes were cold. He said bluntly: "I think he got mad at the thought of his son interfering with his chances of being re-elected and hit him."

She did not protest. She was twining her fingers together. When she asked her next question it was with difficulty. "Was—he going to—to shoot Paul?"

"He was. He could get away with the grand-old-man-avenging-the-death-the-law-couldn't-avenge line. He knew Paul wasn't going to stay dummied up if he was arrested. Paul was doing it, just as he was supporting your father for re-election, because he wanted you. He couldn't get you by pretending he'd killed your brother. He didn't care what anybody else thought, but

he didn't know you thought he had and he would have cleared himself in a second if he had."

She nodded miserably. "I hated him," she said, "and I wronged him and I still hate him." She sobbed. "Why is that, Ned?"

He made an impatient gesture with one hand. "Don't ask me riddles."

"And you," she said, "tricked me and made a fool of me and brought this on me and I don't hate you."

"More riddles," he said.

"How long, Ned," she asked, "how long have you known-known about Father?"

"I don't know. It's been in the back of my head for a long time. That was about the only thing that'd fit in with Paul's foolishness. If he'd killed Taylor he'd've let me know before this. There was no reason why he should hide that from me. There was a reason why he'd hide your father's crimes from me. He knew I didn't like your father. I'd made that plain enough. He didn't think he could trust me not to knife your father. He knew I wouldn't knife *him*. So, when I'd told him I was going to clear up the killing regardless of what he said, he gave me that phony confession to stop me."

She asked: "Why didn't you like Father?"

"Because," he said hotly, "I don't like pimps."

Her face became red, her eyes abashed. She asked in a dry constricted voice: "And you don't like me because-?"

He did not say anything.

She bit her lip and cried: "Answer me!"

"You're all right," he said, "only you're not all right for Paul, not the way you've been playing him. Neither of you were anything but poison for him. I tried to tell him that. I tried to tell him you both considered him a lower form of animal life and fair game for any kind of treatment. I tried to tell him your father was a man all his life used to winning without much trouble and that in a hole he'd either lose his head or turn wolf. Well, he was in love with you, so—" He snapped his teeth together and walked over to the piano.

"You despise me," she said in a low hard voice. "You think I'm a whore."

"I don't despise you," he said irritably, not turning to face her. "Whatever you've done you've paid for and been paid for and that goes for all of us."

There was silence between them then until she said: "Now you and Paul will be friends again."

He turned from the piano with a movement as if he were about to shake himself and looked at the watch on his wrist. "I'll have to say good-by now."

A startled light came into her eyes. "You're not going away?" He nodded. "I can catch the four-thirty."

"You're not going away for good?"

"If I can dodge being brought back for some of these trials and I don't think that'll be so hard."

She held her hands out impulsively. "Take me with you."

He blinked at her. "Do you really want to go or are you just being hysterical?" he asked. Her face was crimson by then. Before she could speak he said: "It doesn't make any difference. I'll take you if you want to go." He frowned. "But all this"—he waved a hand to indicate the house—"who'll take care of that?"

She said bitterly: "I don't care—our creditors."

"There's another thing you ought to think about," he said slowly. "Everybody's going to say you deserted your father as soon as he got in trouble."

"I am deserting him," she said, "and I want people to say that. I don't care what they say—if you'll take me away." She sobbed. "If—I wouldn't if only he hadn't gone away and left him lying there alone in that dark street."

Ned Beaumont said brusquely: "Never mind that now. If you're going get packed. Only what you can get in a couple of bags. We can send for the other stuff later, maybe."

She uttered a high-pitched unnatural laugh and ran out of the room. He lit a cigar, sat down at the piano, and played softly until she returned. She had put on a black hat and black coat and was carrying two traveling-bags.

They rode in a taxicab to his rooms. For most of the ride they were silent. Once she said suddenly: "In that dream—I didn't tell you—the key was glass and shattered in our hands just as we got the door open, because the lock was stiff and we had to force it."

He looked sidewise at her and asked: "Well?"

She shivered. "We couldn't lock the snakes in and they came out all over us and I woke up screaming."

"That was only a dream," he said. "Forget it." He smiled without merriment. "You threw my trout back—in the dream."

The taxicab stopped in front of his house. They went up to his rooms. She offered to help him pack, but he said: "No, I can do it. Sit down and rest. We've got an hour before the train leaves."

She sat in one of the red chairs. "Where are you—we going?" she asked timidly.

"New York, first anyhow."

He had one bag packed when the door-bell rang. "You'd better go into the bedroom," he told her and carried her bags in there. He shut the connecting door when he came out.

He went to the outer door and opened it.

Paul Madvig said: "I came to tell you you were right and I know it now."

"You didn't come last night."

"No, I didn't know it then. I got home right after you left."

Ned Beaumont nodded. "Come in," he said, stepping out of the doorway.

Madvig went into the living-room. He looked immediately at the bags, but let his glance roam around the room for a while before asking: "Going away?"

"Yes."

Madvig sat in the chair Janet Henry had occupied. His age showed in his face and he sat down wearily.

"How's Opal?" Ned Beaumont asked.

"She's all right, poor kid. She'll be all right now."

**"You did it to her."**

"I know, Ned. Jesus, I know it!" Madvig stretched his legs out and looked at his shoes. "I hope you don't think I'm feeling proud of myself." After a pause Madvig added: "I think—I know Opal'd like to see you before you go."

"You'll have to say good-by to her for me and to Mom too. I'm leaving on the four-thirty."

Madvig raised blue eyes clouded by anguish. "You're right, of course, Ned," he said huskily. "but—well—Christ knows you're right!" He looked down at his shoes again.

Ned Beaumont asked: "What are you going to do with your not quite faithful henchmen? Kick them back in line? Or have they kicked themselves back?"

**"Farr and the rest of those rats?"**

**"Uh-huh."**

"I'm going to teach them something." Madvig spoke with determination, but there was no enthusiasm in his voice and he did not look up from his shoes. "It'll cost me four years, but I can use those four years cleaning house and putting together an organization that will stay put."

Ned Beaumont raised his eyebrows. "Going to knife them at the polls?"

"Knife them, hell, dynamite them! Shad's dead. I'm going to let his crew run things for the next four years. There's none of them that can build anything solid enough for me to worry about. I'll get the city back next time and by then I'll have done my housecleaning."

"You could win now," Ned Beaumont said.

"Sure, but I don't want to win with those bastards."

Ned Beaumont nodded. "It takes patience and guts, but it's the best way to play it, I reckon."

"They're all I've got," Madvig said miserably. "I'll never have any brains." He shifted the focus of his eyes from his feet to the fireplace. "Have you got to go, Ned?" he asked almost inaudibly.

**"Got to."**

Madvig cleared his throat violently. "I don't want to be a

God-damned fool," he said, "but I'd like to think that whether you went or stayed you weren't holding anything against me, Ned."

"I'm not holding anything against you, Paul."

Madvig raised his head quickly. "Shake hands with me?"

"Certainly."

Madvig jumped up. His hand caught Ned Beaumont's, crushed it. "Don't go, Ned. Stick it out with me. Christ knows I need you now. Even if I didn't—I'll do my damndest to make up for all that."

Ned Beaumont shook his head. "You haven't got anything to make up for with me."

"And you'll—?"

Ned Beaumont shook his head again. "I can't. I've got to go."

Madvig released the other's hand and sat down again, morosely, saying: "Well, it serves me right."

Ned Beaumont made an impatient gesture. "That's got nothing to do with it." He stopped and bit his lip. Then he said bluntly: "Janet's here."

Madvig stared at him.

Janet Henry opened the bedroom-door and came into the living-room. Her face was pale and drawn, but she held it high. She went straight up to Paul Madvig and said: "I've done you a lot of harm, Paul. I've—"

His face had become pale as hers. Now blood rushed into it. "Don't, Janet," he said hoarsely. "Nothing you could do. . . ." The rest of his speech was unintelligibly mumbled.

She stepped back, flinching.

Ned Beaumont said: "Janet is going away with me."

Madvig's lips parted. He looked dumbly at Ned Beaumont and as he looked the blood went out of his face again. When his face was quite bloodless he mumbled something of which only the word "luck" could be understood, turned clumsily around, went to the door, opened it, and went out, leaving it open behind him.

Janet Henry looked at Ned Beaumont. He stared fixedly at the door.





# THE THIN MAN



I was leaning against the bar in a speakeasy on Fifty-second Street, waiting for Nora to finish her Christmas shopping, when a girl got up from the table where she had been sitting with three other people and came over to me. She was small and blonde, and whether you looked at her face or at her body in powder-blue sports clothes the result was satisfactory. "Aren't you Nick Charles?" she asked.

I said: "Yes."

She held out her hand. "I'm Dorothy Wynant. You don't remember me, but you ought to remember my father, Clyde Wynant. You—"

"Sure," I said, "and I remember you now, but you were only a kid of eleven or twelve then, weren't you?"

"Yes, that was eight years ago. Listen: remember those stories you told me? Were they true?"

"Probably not. How is your father?"

She laughed. "I was going to ask you. Mamma divorced him, you know, and we never hear from him—except when he gets in the newspapers now and then with some of his carryings on. Don't you ever see him?"

My glass was empty. I asked her what she would have to drink, she said Scotch and soda, I ordered two of them and

said: "No, I've been living in San Francisco."

She said slowly: "I'd like to see him. Mamma would raise hell if she found it out, but I'd like to see him."

"Well?"

"He's not where we used to live, on Riverside Drive, and he's not in the phone book or city directory."

"Try his lawyer," I suggested. [ 0.8.2]

Her face brightened. "Who is he?"

"It used to be a fellow named Mac-something-or-other-Macaulay, that's it, Herbert Macaulay. He was in the Singer Building."

"Lend me a nickel," she said, and went out to the telephone. She came back smiling. "I found him. He's just round the corner on Fifth Avenue."

"Your father?"

"The lawyer. He says my father's out of town. I'm going round to see him." She raised her glass to me. "Family reunions. Look, who don't—"

Asta jumped up and punched me in the belly with her front feet. Nora, at the other end of the leash, said: "She's had a swell afternoon—knocked over a table of toys at Lord & Taylor's, scared a fat woman silly by licking her leg in Saks', and's been patted by three policemen."

I made introductions. "My wife, Dorothy Wynant. Her father was once a client of mine, when she was only so high. A good guy, but screwy."

"I was fascinated by him," Dorothy said, meaning me, "a real live detective, and used to follow him around making him tell me about his experiences. He told me awful lies, but I believed every word."

I said: "You look tired, Nora."

"I am. Let's sit down."

Dorothy Wynant said she had to go back to her table. She shook hands with Nora; we must drop in for cocktails, they were living at the Courtland, her mother's name was Jorgensen now. We would be glad to and she must come see us some time, we were at the Normandie and would be in New York

for another week or two. Dorothy patted the dog's head and left us.

We found a table. Nora said: "She's pretty."

"If you like them like that."

She grinned at me. "You got types?"

"Only you, darling-lanky brunettes with wicked jaws."

"And how about the red-head you wandered off with at the Quinns' last night?"

"That's silly," I said. "She just wanted to show me some French etchings."

2

The next day Herbert Macaulay telephoned me. "Hello. I didn't know you were back in town till Dorothy Wynant told me. How about lunch?"

"What time is it?"

"Half past eleven. Did I wake you up?"

"Yes," I said, "but that's all right. Suppose you come up here for lunch: I've got a hangover and don't feel like running around much. . . . O.K., say one o'clock."

I had a drink with Nora, who was going out to have her hair washed, then another after a shower, and was feeling better by the time the telephone rang again.

A female voice asked: "Is Mr. Macaulay there?"

"Not yet."

"Sorry to trouble you, but would you mind asking him to call his office as soon as he gets there? It's important."

I promised to do that.

Macaulay arrived about ten minutes later. He was a big curly-haired, rosy-checked, rather good-looking chap of about my age-forty-one-though he looked younger. He was supposed to be a pretty good lawyer. I had worked on several jobs for him when I was living in New York and we had always got along nicely.

Now we shook hands and patted each other's backs, and he asked me how the world was treating me, and I said, "Fine,"

and asked him and he said, "Fine," and I told him to call his office.

He came away from the telephone frowning. "Wynant's back in town," he said, "and wants me to meet him."

I turned around with the drinks I had poured. "Well, the lunch can--"

"Let him wait," he said, and took one of the glasses from me.

"Still as screwy as ever?"

"That's no joke," Macaulay said solemnly. "You heard they had him in a sanatorium for nearly a year back in '29?"

"No."

He nodded. He sat down, put his glass on a table beside his chair, and leaned towards me a little. "What's Mimi up to, Charles?"

"Mimi? Oh, the wife--the ex-wife. I don't know. Does she have to be up to something?"

"She usually is," he said dryly, and then very slowly, "and I thought you'd know."

So that was it. I said: "Listen, Mac, I haven't been a detective for six years, since 1927."

He stared at me.

"On the level," I assured him, "a year after I got married, my wife's father died and left her a lumber mill and a narrow-gauge railroad and some other things and I quit the Agency to look after them. Anyway I wouldn't be working for Mimi Wynant, or Jorgensen, or whatever her name is--she never liked me and I never liked her."

"Oh, I didn't think you--" Macaulay broke off with a vague gesture and picked up his glass. When he took it away from his mouth, he said: "I was just wondering. Here Mimi phones me three days ago--Tuesday--trying to find Wynant; then yesterday Dorothy phones, saying you told her to, and comes around, and--I thought you were still sleuthing, so I was wondering what it was all about."

"Didn't they tell you?"

"Sure--they wanted to see him for old times' sake. That means a lot."

"You lawyers are a suspicious crew," I said. "Maybe they did—that and money. But what's the fuss about? Is he in hiding?"

Macaulay shrugged. "You know as much about it as I do. I haven't seen him since October." He drank again. "How long are you going to be in town?"

"Till after New Year's," I told him and went to the telephone to ask room service for menus.

3

Nora and I went to the opening of *Honeymoon* at the Little Theatre that night and then to a party given by some people named Freeman or Fielding or something. I felt pretty low when she called me the next morning. She gave me a newspaper and a cup of coffee and said: "Read that."

I patiently read a paragraph or two, then put the paper down and took a sip of coffee. "Fun's fun," I said, "but right now I'd swap you all the interviews with Mayor-elect O'Brien ever printed—and throw in the Indian picture—for a slug of whis—"

"Not that, stupid." She put a finger on the paper. "That."

INVENTOR'S SECRETARY  
MURDERED IN APARTMENT

---

JULIA WOLF'S BULLET-RIDDLED BODY FOUND;  
POLICE SEEK HER EMPLOYER, CLYDE WYNANT

---

The bullet-riddled body of Julia Wolf, thirty-two-year-old confidential secretary to Clyde Miller Wynant, well-known inventor, was discovered late yesterday afternoon in the dead woman's apartment at 411 East Fifty-fourth St. by Mrs. Christian Jorgensen, divorced wife of the inventor, who had gone there in an attempt to learn her former husband's present address.

Mrs. Jorgensen, who returned Monday after a six-year stay in Europe, told police that she heard feeble groans

when she rang the murdered woman's doorbell, whereupon she notified an elevator boy, Mervin Holly, who called Walter Meany, apartment-house superintendent. Miss Wolf was lying on the bedroom floor with four 32-calibre bullet-wounds in her chest when they entered the apartment, and died without having recovered consciousness before police and medical aid arrived.

Herbert Macaulay, Wynant's attorney, told the police that he had not seen the inventor since October. He stated that Wynant called him on the telephone yesterday and made an appointment, but failed to keep it; and disclaimed any knowledge of his client's whereabouts. Miss Wolf, Macaulay stated, had been in the inventor's employ for the past eight years. The attorney said he knew nothing about the dead woman's family or private affairs and could throw no light on her murder.

The bullet-wounds could not have been self-inflicted, according to...

The rest of it was the usual police department hand-out.

"Do you suppose he killed her?" Nora asked when I put the paper down again.

"Wynant? I wouldn't be surprised. He's batty as hell."

"Did you know her?"

"Yes. How about a drop of something to cut the phlegm?"

"What was she like?"

"Not bad," I said. "She wasn't bad-looking and she had a lot of sense and a lot of nerve—and it took both to live with that guy."

"She lived with him?"

"Yes. I want a drink, please. That is, it was like that when I knew them."

"Why don't you have some breakfast first? Was she in love with him or was it just business?"

"I don't know. It's too early for breakfast."

When Nora opened the door to go out, the dog came in and put her front feet on the bed, her face in my face. I rubbed

her head and tried to remember something Wynant had once said to me, something about women and dogs. It was not the woman-spaniel-walnut-tree line. I could not remember what it was, but there seemed to be some point in trying to remember.

Nora returned with two drinks and another question: "What's he like?"

*ant* "Tall—over six feet—and one of the thinnest men I've ever seen. He must be about fifty now, and his hair was almost white when I knew him. Usually needs a haircut, ragged brindle mustache, bites his fingernails." I pushed the dog away to reach for my drink.

"Sounds lovely. What were you doing with him?"

"A fellow who'd worked for him accused him of stealing some kind of idea or invention from him. Kelterman was his name. He tried to shake Wynant down by threatening to shoot him, bomb his house, kidnap his children, cut his wife's throat—I don't know what all—if he didn't come across. We never caught him—must've scared him off. Anyway, the threats stopped and nothing happened."

Nora stopped drinking to ask: "Did Wynant really steal it?"

"Tch, tch, tch," I said. "This is Christmas Eve: try to think good of your fellow man."

4

That afternoon I took Asta for a walk, explained to two people that she was a Schnauzer and not a cross between a Scottie and an Irish terrier, stopped at Jim's for a couple of drinks, ran into Larry Crowley, and brought him back to the Normandie with me. Nora was pouring cocktails for the Quinns, Margot Innes, a man whose name I did not catch, and Dorothy Wynant.

Dorothy said she wanted to talk to me, so we carried our cocktails into the bedroom.

She came to the point right away. "Do you think my father killed her, Nick?"

"No," I said. "Why should I?"



"Well, the police have— Listen, she was his mistress, wasn't she?"

I nodded. "When I knew them."

She stared at her glass while saying, "He's my father. I never liked him. I never liked Mamma." She looked up at me. "I don't like Gilbert." Gilbert was her brother.

"Don't let that worry you. Lots of people don't like their relatives."

"Do you like them?"

"My relatives?"

"Mine." She scowled at me. "And stop talking to me as if I was still twelve."

"It's not that," I explained. "I'm getting tight."

"Well, do you?"

I shook my head. "You were all right, just a spoiled kid. I could get along without the rest of them."

"What's the matter with us?" she asked, not argumentatively, but as if she really wanted to know.

"Different things. Your—"

Harrison Quinn opened the door and said: "Come on over and play some ping-pong, Nick."

"In a little while."

"Bring beautiful along." He leered at Dorothy and went away.

She said: "I don't suppose you know Jorgensen."

"I know a Nels Jorgensen."

"Some people have all the luck. This one's named Christian. He's a honey. That's Mamma—divorces a lunatic and marries a gigolo." Her eyes became wet. She caught her breath in a sob and asked: "What am I going to do, Nick?" Her voice was a frightened child's.

I put an arm around her and made what I hoped were comforting sounds. She cried on my lapel. The telephone beside the bed began to ring. In the next room *Rise and Shine* was coming through the radio. My glass was empty. I said: "Walk out on them."

She sobbed again. "You can't walk out on yourself."

"Maybe I don't know what you're talking about."

"Please don't tease me," she said humbly.

Nora, coming in to answer the telephone, looked questioningly at me. I made a face at her over the girl's head.

When Nora said "Hello" into the telephone, the girl stepped quickly back away from me and blushed. "I-I'm sorry," she stammered, "I didn't--"

Nora smiled sympathetically at her. I said: "Don't be a dope." The girl found her handkerchief and dabbed at her eyes with it.

Nora spoke into the telephone: "Yes. . . . I'll see if he's in. Who's calling, please?" She put a hand over the mouthpiece and addressed me: "It's a man named Norman. Do you want to talk to him?"

I said I didn't know and took the telephone. "Hello."

A somewhat harsh voice said: "Mr. Charles? . . . Mr. Charles, I understand that you were formerly connected with the Trans-American Detective Agency."

"Who is this?" I asked.

"My name is Albert Norman, Mr. Charles, which probably means nothing to you, but I would like to lay a proposition before you. I am sure you will--"

"What kind of a proposition?"

"I can't discuss it over the phone, Mr. Charles, but if you will give me half an hour of your time, I can promise--"

"Sorry," I said. "I'm pretty busy and--"

"But, Mr. Charles, this is--" Then there was a loud noise: it could have been a shot or something falling or anything else that would make a loud noise. I said, "Hello," a couple of times, got no answer, and hung up.

Nora had Dorothy over in front of a looking-glass soothing her with powder and rouge. I said, "A guy selling insurance," and went into the living-room for a drink.

Some more people had come in. I spoke to them. Harrison Quinn left the sofa where he had been sitting with Margot Innes and said: "Now ping-pong." Asta jumped up and punched me in the belly with her front feet. I shut off the radio and poured myself a cocktail. The man whose name I had not caught

was saying: "Comes the revolution and we'll all be lined up against the wall—first thing." He seemed to think it was a good idea.

Quinn came over to refill his glass. He looked towards the bedroom door. "Where'd you find the little blonde?"

"Used to bounce it on my knee."

"Which knee?" he asked. "Could I touch it?"

Nora and Dorothy came out of the bedroom. I saw an afternoon paper on the radio and picked it up. Headlines said:

JULIA WOLF ONCE RACKETEER'S GIRL;  
ARTHUR NUNHEIM IDENTIFIES BODY;  
WYNANT STILL MISSING

Nora, at my elbow, spoke in a low voice: "I asked her to have dinner with us. Be nice to the child"—Nora was twenty-six—"she's all upset."

"Whatever you say." I turned around. Dorothy, across the room, was laughing at something Quinn was telling her. "But if you get mixed up in people's troubles, don't expect me to kiss you where you're hurt."

"I won't. You're a sweet old fool. Don't read that here now." She took the newspaper away from me and stuck it out of sight behind the radio.

5

Nora could not sleep that night. She read Chaliapin's memoirs until I began to doze and then woke me up by asking: "Are you asleep?"

I said I was.

She lit a cigarette for me, one for herself. "Don't you ever think you'd like to go back to detecting once in a while just for the fun of it? You know, when something special comes up, like the Lindb—"

"Darling," I said, "my guess is that Wynant killed her, and the police'll catch him without my help. Anyway, it's nothing in my life."

"I didn't mean just that, but--"

"But besides I haven't the time: I'm too busy trying to see that you don't lose any of the money I married you for." I kissed her. "Don't you think maybe a drink would help you to sleep?"

"No, thanks."

"Maybe it would if I took one." When I brought my Scotch and soda back to bed, she was frowning into space. I said: "She's cute, but she's cuckoo. She wouldn't be his daughter if she wasn't. You can't tell how much of what she says is what she thinks and you can't tell how much of what she thinks ever really happened. I like her, but I think you're letting--"

"I'm not sure I like her," Nora said thoughtfully, "she's probably a little bastard, but if a quarter of what she told us is true, she's in a tough spot."

"There's nothing I can do to help her."

"She thinks you can."

"And so do you, which shows that no matter what you think, you can always get somebody else to go along with you."

Nora sighed. "I wish you were sober enough to talk to." She leaned over to take a sip of my drink. "I'll give you your Christmas present now if you'll give me mine."

I shook my head. "At breakfast."

"But it's Christmas now."

"Breakfast."

"Whatever you're giving me," she said, "I hope I don't like it."

"You'll have to keep them anyway, because the man at the Aquarium said he positively wouldn't take them back. He said they'd already bitten the tails off the--"

"It wouldn't hurt you any to find out if you can help her, would it? She's got so much confidence in you, Nicky."

"Everybody trusts Greeks."

"Please."

"You just want to poke your nose into things that--"

"I meant to ask you: did his wife know the Wolf girl was his mistress?"

"I don't know. She didn't like her."

"What's the wife like?"

"I don't know—a woman."

"Good-looking?"

"Used to be very."

"She old?"

"Forty, forty-two. Cut it out, Nora. You don't want any part of it. Let the Charleses stick to the Charleses' troubles and the Wynants stick to the Wynants'."

She pouted. "Maybe that drink would help me."

I got out of bed and mixed her a drink. As I brought it into the bedroom, the telephone began to ring. I looked at my watch on the table. It was nearly five o'clock.

Nora was talking into the telephone: "Hello. . . . Yes, speaking." She looked sidewise at me. I shook my head no. "Yes. . . . Why, certainly. . . . Yes, certainly." She put the telephone down and grinned at me.

"You're wonderful," I said. "Now what?"

"Dorothy's coming up. I think she's tight."

"That's great." I picked up my bathrobe. "I was afraid I was going to have to go to sleep."

She was bending over looking for her slippers. "Don't be such an old fuff. You can sleep all day." She found her slippers and stood up in them. "Is she really as afraid of her mother as she says?"

"If she's got any sense. Mimi's poison."

Nora screwed up her dark eyes at me and asked slowly: "What are you holding out on me?"

"Oh, dear," I said, "I was hoping I wouldn't have to tell you. Dorothy is really my daughter. I didn't know what I was doing, Nora. It was spring in Venice and I was so young and there was a moon over the—"

"Be funny. Don't you want something to eat?"

"If you do. What do you want?"

"Raw chopped beef sandwich with a lot of onion and some coffee."

Dorothy arrived while I was telephoning an all-night delica-

tessen. When I went into the living-room, she stood up with some difficulty and said: "I'm awfully sorry, Nick, to keep bothering you and Nora like this, but I can't go home this way tonight. I can't. I'm afraid to. I don't know what'd happen to me, what I'd do. Please don't make me." She was very drunk. Asta sniffed at her ankles.

I said: "Sh-h-h. You're all right here. Sit down. There'll be some coffee in a little while. Where'd you get the snoutful?"

She sat down and shook her head stupidly. "I don't know. I've been everywhere since I left you. I've been everywhere except home because I can't go home this way. Look what I got." She stood up again and took a battered automatic pistol out of her coat pocket. "Look at that." She waved it at me while Asta, wagging her tail, jumped happily at it.

Nora made a noise with her breathing. The back of my neck was cold. I pushed the dog aside and took the pistol away from Dorothy. "What kind of clowning is this? Sit down." I dropped the pistol into a bathrobe pocket and pushed Dorothy down in her chair.

"Don't be mad at me, Nick," she whined. "You can keep it. I don't want to make a nuisance of myself."

"Where'd you get it?" I asked.

"In a speakeasy on Tenth Avenue. I gave a man my bracelet—the one with the emeralds and diamonds—for it."

"And then won it back from him in a crap game," I said. "You've still got it on."

She stared at her bracelet. "I thought I did."

I looked at Nora and shook my head. Nora said: "Aw, don't bully her, Nick. She's—"

"He's not bullying me, Nora, he's really not," Dorothy said quickly. "He—he's the only person I got in the world to turn to."

I remembered Nora had not touched her Scotch and soda, so I went into the bedroom and drank it. When I came back, Nora was sitting on the arm of Dorothy's chair with an arm around the girl. Dorothy was sniffing; Nora was saying: "But Nick's not mad, dear. He likes you." She looked up at me. "You're not mad, are you, Nicky?"

"No, I'm just hurt." I sat on the sofa. "Where'd you get the gun, Dorothy?"

"From a man—I told you."

"What man?"

"I told you—a man in a speakeasy."

"And you gave him a bracelet for it."

"I thought I did, but—look—I've still got my bracelet."

"I noticed that."

Nora patted the girl's shoulder. "Of course you've still got your bracelet."

I said: "When the boy comes with that coffee and stuff, I'm going to bribe him to stick around. I'm not going to stay alone with a couple of—"

Nora scowled at me, told the girl: "Don't mind him. He's been like that all night."

The girl said: "He thinks I'm a silly little drunken fool."

Nora patted her shoulder some more.

I asked: "But what'd you want a gun for?"

Dorothy sat up straight and stared at me with wide drunken eyes. "Him," she whispered excitedly, "if he bothered me. I was afraid because I was drunk. That's what it was. And then I was afraid of that, too, so I came here."

"You mean your father?" Nora asked, trying to keep excitement out of her voice.

The girl shook her head. "Clyde Wynant's my father. My stepfather." She leaned against Nora's breast.

Nora said, "Oh," in a tone of very complete understanding. Then she said, "You poor child," and looked significantly at me.

I said: "Let's all have a drink."

"Not me." Nora was scowling at me again. "And I don't think Dorothy wants one."

"Yes, she does. It'll help her sleep." I poured her a terrific dose of Scotch and saw that she drank it. It worked nicely: she was sound asleep by the time our coffee and sandwiches came.

Nora said: "Now you're satisfied."

"Now I'm satisfied. Shall we tuck her in before we eat?"

I carried her into the bedroom and helped Nora undress her.

She had a beautiful little body.

We went back to our food. I took the pistol out of my pocket and examined it. It had been kicked around a lot. There were two cartridges in it, one in the chamber, one in the magazine.

"What are you going to do with it?" Nora asked.

"Nothing till I find out if it's the one Julia Wolf was killed with. It's a .32."

"But she said—"

"She got it in a speakeasy—from a man—for a bracelet. I heard her."

Nora leaned over her sandwich at me. Her eyes were very shiny and almost black. "Do you suppose she got it from her stepfather?"

"I do," I said, but I said it too earnestly.

Nora said: "You're a Greek louse. But maybe she did; you don't know. And you don't believe her story."

"Listen, darling, tomorrow I'll buy you a whole lot of detective stories, but don't worry your pretty little head over mysteries tonight. All she was trying to tell you was that she was afraid Jorgensen was waiting to try to make her when she got home and she was afraid she was drunk enough to give in."

"But her mother!"

"This family's a family. You can—"

Dorothy Wynant, standing unsteadily in the doorway in a nightgown much too long for her, blinked at the light and said: "Please, can I come in for a little while? I'm afraid in there alone."

"Sure."

She came over and curled up beside me on the sofa while Nora went to get something to put around her.

## 6

The three of us were at breakfast early that afternoon when the Jorgensens arrived. Nora answered the telephone and came away from it trying to pretend she was not tickled. "It's your mother," she told Dorothy. "She's downstairs. I told her to come up."



Dorothy said: "Damn it. I wish I hadn't phoned her."

I said: "We might just as well be living in the lobby."

Nora said: "He doesn't mean that." She patted Dorothy's shoulder.

The doorbell rang. I went to the door.

Eight years had done no damage to Mimi's looks. She was a little riper, showier, that was all. She was larger than her daughter, and her blondness was more vivid. She laughed and held her hands out to me. "Merry Christmas. It's awfully good to see you after all these years. This is my husband. Mr. Charles. Chris."

I said, "I'm glad to see you, Mimi," and shook hands with Jorgensen. He was probably five years younger than his wife, a tall thin erect dark man, carefully dressed and sleek, with smooth hair and a waxed mustache.

He bowed from the waist. "How do you do, Mr. Charles?" His accent was heavy, Teutonic, his hand was lean and muscular.

We went inside.

Mimi, when the introductions were over, apologized to Nora for popping in on us. "But I did want to see your husband again, and then I know the only way to get this brat of mine anywhere on time is to carry her off bodily." She turned her smile on Dorothy. "Better get dressed, honey."

Honey grumbled through a mouthful of toast that she didn't see why she had to waste an afternoon at Aunt Alice's even if it was Christmas. "I bet Gilbert's not going."

Mimi said Asta was a lovely dog and asked me if I had *any* idea where that ex-husband of hers might be.

"No."

She went on playing with the dog. "He's crazy, absolutely crazy, to disappear at a time like this. No wonder the police at first thought he had something to do with it."

"What do they think now?" I asked.

She looked up at me. "Haven't you seen the papers?"

"No."

"It's a man named Morelli—a gangster. He killed her. He was her lover."

"They caught him?"

"Not yet, but he did it. I wish I could find Clyde. Macaulay won't help me at all. He says he doesn't know where he is, but that's ridiculous. He has powers of attorney from him and everything and I know very well he's in touch with Clyde. Do you think Macaulay's trustworthy?"

"He's Wynant's lawyer," I said. "There's no reason why you should trust him."

"Just what I thought." She moved over a little on the sofa. "Sit down. I've got millions of things to ask you."

"How about a drink first?"

"Anything but egg-nog," she said. "It makes me bilious."

When I came out of the pantry, Nora and Jorgensen were trying their French on each other, Dorothy was still pretending to eat, and Mimi was playing with the dog again. I distributed the drinks and sat down beside Mimi.

She said: "Your wife's lovely."

"I like her."

"Tell me the truth, Nick: do you think Clyde's really crazy? I mean crazy enough that something ought to be done about it."

"How do I know?"

"I'm worried about the children," she said. "I've no claim on him any more—the settlement he made when I divorced him took care of all that—but the children have. We're absolutely penniless now and I'm worried about them. If he is crazy he's just as likely as not to throw away everything and leave them without a cent. What do you think I ought to do?"

"Thinking about putting him in the booby-hatch?"

"No-o," she said slowly, "but I would like to talk to him." She put a hand on my arm. "You could find him."

I shook my head.

"Won't you help me, Nick? We used to be friends." Her big blue eyes were soft and appealing.

Dorothy, at the table, was watching us suspiciously.

"For Christ's sake, Mimi," I said, "there's a thousand detec-

tives in New York. Hire one of them. I'm not working at it any more."

"I know, but— Was Dorry very drunk last night?"

"Maybe I was. She seemed all right to me."

"Don't you think she's gotten to be a pretty little thing?"

"I always thought she was."

She thought that over for a moment, then said: "She's only a child, Nick."

"What's that got to do with what?" I asked.

She smiled. "How about getting some clothes on, Dorry?"

Dorothy sulkily repeated that she didn't see why she had to waste an afternoon at Aunt Alice's.

Jorgensen turned to address his wife: "Mrs. Charles has the great kindness to suggest that we do not—"

"Yes," Nora said, "why don't you stay awhile? There'll be some people coming in. It won't be very exciting, but—" She waved her glass a little to finish the sentence.

"I'd love to," Mimi replied slowly, "but I'm afraid Alice—"

"Make our apologies to her by telephone," Jorgensen suggested.

"I'll do it," Dorothy said.

Mimi nodded. "Be nice to her."

Dorothy went into the bedroom. Everybody seemed much brighter. Nora caught my eye and winked merrily and I had to take it and like it because Mimi was looking at me then.

Mimi asked me: "You really didn't want us to stay, did you?"

"Of course."

"Chances are you're lying. Weren't you sort of fond of poor Julia?"

"'Poor Julia' sounds swell from you. I liked her all right."

Mimi put her hand on my arm again. "She broke up my life with Clyde. Naturally I hated her—then—but that's a long time ago. I had no feeling against her when I went to see her Friday. And, Nick, I saw her die. She didn't deserve to die. It was horrible. No matter what I'd felt, there'd be nothing left but pity now. I meant 'poor Julia' when I said it."

"I don't know what you're up to," I said. "I don't know what any of you are up to."

"Any of us," she repeated. "Has Dorry been—"

Dorothy came in from the bedroom. "I squared it." She kissed her mother on the mouth and sat down beside her.

Mimi, looking in her compact-mirror to see her mouth had not been smeared, asked: "She wasn't peevish about it?"

"No, I squared it. What do you have to do to get a drink?"

I said: "You have to walk over to that table where the ice and bottles are and pour it."

Mimi said: "You drink too much."

"I don't drink as much as Nick." She went over to the table.

Mimi shook her head. "These children! I mean you were pretty fond of Julia Wolf, weren't you?"

Dorothy called: "You want one, Nick?"

"Thanks," I said; then to Mimi, "I liked her well enough."

"You're the damnedest evasive man," she complained. "Did you like her as much as you used to like me, for instance?"

"You mean those couple of afternoons we killed?"

Her laugh was genuine. "That's certainly an answer." She turned to Dorothy, carrying glasses towards us. "You'll have to get a robe that shade of blue, darling. It's very becoming to you."

I took one of the glasses from Dorothy and said I thought I had better get dressed.

7

When I came out of the bathroom, Nora and Dorothy were in the bedroom, Nora combing her hair, Dorothy sitting on the side of the bed dangling a stocking.

Nora made a kiss at me in the dressing-table mirror. She looked very happy.

"You like Nick a lot, don't you, Nora?" Dorothy asked.

"He's an old Greek fool, but I'm used to him."

"Charles isn't a Greek name."

"It's Charalambides," I explained. "When the old man came over, the mugg that put him through Ellis Island said Charalambides was too long—too much trouble to write—and whittled

it down to Charles. It was all right with the old man; they could have called him X so they let him in."

Dorothy stared at me. "I never know when you're lying." She started to put on the stocking, stopped. "What's Mamma trying to do to you?"

"Nothing. Pump me. She'd like to know what you did and said last night."

"I thought so. What'd you tell her?"

"What could I tell her? You didn't do or say anything."

She wrinkled her forehead over that, but when she spoke again it was about something else: "I never knew there was anything between you and Mamma. Of course I was only a kid then and wouldn't have known what it was all about even if I'd noticed anything, but I didn't even know you called each other by your first names."

Nora turned from the mirror laughing. "Now we're getting somewhere." She waved the comb at Dorothy. "Go on, dear."

Dorothy said earnestly: "Well, I didn't know."

I was taking laundry pins out of a shirt. "What do you know now?" I asked.

"Nothing," she said slowly, and her face began to grow pink, "but I can guess." She bent over her stocking.

"Can and do," I growled. "You're a dope, but don't look so embarrassed. You can't help it if you've got a dirty mind."

She raised her head and laughed, but when she asked, "Do you think I take after Mamma much?" she was serious.

"I wouldn't be surprised."

"But do you?"

"You want me to say no. No."

"That's what I have to live with," Nora said cheerfully. "You can't do anything with him."

I finished dressing first and went out to the living-room. Mimi was sitting on Jorgensen's knees. She stood up and asked: "What'd you get for Christmas?"

"Nora gave me a watch." I showed it to her.

She said it was lovely, and it was. "What'd you give her?"

"Necklace."

Jorgensen said, "May I?" and rose to mix himself a drink.

The doorbell rang. I let the Quinns and Margot Innes in, introduced them to the Jorgensens. Presently Nora and Dorothy finished dressing and came out of the bedroom, and Quinn attached himself to Dorothy. Larry Crowley arrived, with a girl named Denis, and a few minutes later the Edges. I won thirty-two dollars—on the cuff—from Margot at backgammon. The Denis girl had to go into the bedroom and lie down awhile. Alice Quinn, with Margot's help, tore her husband away from Dorothy at a little after six and carried him off to keep a date they had. The Edges left. Mimi put on her coat, got her husband and daughter into their coats.

"It's awful short notice," she said. "but can't you come to dinner tomorrow night?"

Nora said: "Certainly."

We shook hands and made polite speeches all around and they went away. Nora shut the door after them and leaned her back against it. "Jesus, he's a handsome guy," she said.

## 8

So far I had known just where I stood on the Wolf-Wynant-Jorgensen troubles and what I was doing—the answers were, respectively, nowhere and nothing—but when we stopped at Reuben's for coffee on our way home at four the next morning, Nora opened a newspaper and found a line in one of the gossip columns: "Nick Charles, former Trans-American Detective Agency ace, on from Coast to sift the Julia Wolf murder mystery"; and when I opened my eyes and sat up in bed some six hours later Nora was shaking me and a man with a gun in his hand was standing in the bedroom doorway.

He was a plump dark youngish man of medium height, broad through the jaws, narrow between the eyes. He wore a black derby hat, a black overcoat that fitted him very snugly, a dark suit, and black shoes, all looking as if he had bought them within the past fifteen minutes. The gun, a blunt black .38-calibre automatic, lay comfortably in his hand, not pointing at anything.

Nora was saying: "He made me let him in, Nick. He said he had to—"

"I got to talk to you," the man with the gun said. "That's all, but I got to do that." His voice was low, rasping.

I had blinked myself awake by then. I looked at Nora. She was excited, but apparently not frightened: she might have been watching a horse she had a bet on coming down the stretch with a nose lead.

I said: "All right, talk, but do you mind putting the gun away? My wife doesn't care, but I'm pregnant and I don't want the child to be born with—"

He smiled with his lower lip. "You don't have to tell me you're tough. I heard about you." He put the pistol in his overcoat pocket. "I'm Shep Morelli."

"I never heard about you," I said.

He took a step into the room and began to shake his head from side to side. "I didn't knock Julia off."

"Maybe you didn't, but you're bringing the news to the wrong place. I got nothing to do with it."

"I haven't seen her in three months," he said. "We were washed up."

"Tell the police."

"I wouldn't have any reason to hurt her: she was always on the up and up with me."

"That's all swell," I said, "only you're peddling your fish in the wrong market."

"Listen." He took another step towards the bed. "Studsy Burke tells me you used to be O.K. That's why I'm here. Do the—"

"How is Studsy?" I asked. "I haven't seen him since the time he went up the river in '23 or '24."

"He's all right. He'd like to see you. He's got a joint on West Forty-ninth, the Pigiron Club. But listen, what's the law doing to me? Do they think I did it? Or is it just something else to pin on me?"

I shook my head. "I'd tell you if I knew. Don't let newspapers fool you: I'm not in this. Ask the police."

"That'd be very smart." He smiled with his lower lip again. "That'd be the smartest thing I ever did. Me that a police captain's been in a hospital three weeks on account we had an argument. The boys would like me to come in and ask 'em questions. They'd like it right down to the end of their black-jacks." He turned a hand over, palm up. "I come to you on the level. Studsy says you're on the level. Be on the level."

"I'm being on the level," I assured him. "If I knew anything I'd—"

Knuckles drummed on the corridor door, three times, sharply. Morelli's gun was in his hand before the noise stopped. His eyes seemed to move in all directions at once. His voice was a metallic snarl deep in his chest: "Well?"

"I don't know." I sat up a little higher in bed and nodded at the gun in his hand. "That makes it your party." The gun pointed very accurately at my chest. I could hear the blood in my ears, and my lips felt swollen. I said: "There's no fire-escape." I put my left hand out towards Nora, who was sitting on the far side of the bed.

The knuckles hit the door again, and a deep voice called: "Open up. Police."

Morelli's lower lip crawled up to lap the upper, and the whites of his eyes began to show under the irises. "You son of a bitch," he said slowly, almost as if he were sorry for me. He moved his feet the least bit, flattening them against the floor.

A key touched the outer lock.

I hit Nora with my left hand, knocking her down across the room. The pillow I chucked with my right hand at Morelli's gun seemed to have no weight; it drifted slow as a piece of tissue paper. No noise in the world, before or after, was ever as loud as Morelli's gun going off. Something pushed my left side as I sprawled across the floor. I caught one of his ankles and rolled over with it, bringing him down on me, and he clubbed my back with the gun until I got a hand free and began to hit him as low in the body as I could.

Men came in and dragged us apart.



It took us five minutes to bring Nora to.

She sat up holding her cheek and looked around the room until she saw Morelli, nippers on one wrist, standing between two detectives. Morelli's face was a mess: the coppers had worked him over a little just for the fun of it. Nora glared at me. "You damned fool," she said, "you didn't have to knock me cold. I knew you'd take him, but I wanted to see it."

One of the coppers laughed. "Jesus," he said admiringly, "there's a woman with hair on her chest."

She smiled at him and stood up. When she looked at me she stopped smiling. "Nick, you're—"

I said I didn't think it was much and opened what was left of my pyjama-coat. Morelli's bullet had scooped out a gutter perhaps four inches long under my left nipple. A lot of blood was running out of it, but it was not very deep.

Morelli said: "Tough luck. A couple of inches over would make a lot of difference the right way."

The copper who had admired Nora—he was a big sandy man of forty-eight or fifty in a gray suit that did not fit him very well—slapped Morelli's mouth.

Keyser, the Normandie's manager, said he would get a doctor and went to the telephone. Nora ran to the bathroom for towels.

I put a towel over the wound and lay down on the bed. "I'm all right. Don't let's fuss over it till the doctor comes. How'd you people happen to pop in?"

The copper who had slapped Morelli said: "We happen to hear this is getting to be kind of a meeting-place for Wynant's family and his lawyer and everybody, so we think we'll kind of keep an eye on it in case he happens to show up, and this morning when Mack here, who was the eye we were kind of keeping on it at the time, sees this bird duck in, he gives us a ring and we get hold of Mr. Keyser and come on up, and pretty lucky for you."

"Yes, pretty lucky for me, or maybe I wouldn't've got shot."

He eyed me suspiciously. His eyes were pale gray and watery. "This bird a friend of yours?"

"I never saw him before."

"What'd he want of you?"

"Wanted to tell me he didn't kill the Wolf girl."

"What's that to you?"

"Nothing."

"What'd he think it was to you?"

"Ask him. I don't know."

"I'm asking you."

"Keep on asking."

"I'll ask you another one: you're going to swear to the complaint on him shooting you?"

"That's another one I can't answer right now. Maybe it was an accident."

"Oke. There's plenty of time. I guess we got to ask you a lot more things than we'd figured on." He turned to one of his companions: there were four of them. "We'll frisk the joint."

"Not without a warrant," I told him.

"So you say. Come on, Andy." They began to search the place.

The doctor—a colorless whisp of a man with the snuffles—came in, clucked and sniffed over my side, got the bleeding stopped and a bandage on, and told me I would have nothing to worry about if I lay still for a couple of days. Nobody would tell the doctor anything. The police would not let him touch Morelli. He went away looking even more colorless and vague.

The big sandy man had returned from the living-room holding one hand behind him. He waited until the doctor had gone, then asked: "Have you got a pistol permit?"

"No."

"Then what are you doing with this?" He brought from behind him the gun I had taken from Dorothy Wynant.

There was nothing I could say.

"You've heard about the Sullivan Act?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Then you know where you stand. This gun yours?"

"No."

"Whose is it?"

"I'll have to try to remember."

He put the pistol in his pocket and sat down on a chair

beside the bed. "Listen, Mr. Charles," he said. "I guess we're both of us doing this wrong. I don't want to get tough with you and I don't guess you really want to get tough with me. That hole in your side can't be making you feel any too good, so I ain't going to bother you any more till you've had a little rest. Then maybe we can get together the way we ought to."

"Thanks," I said and meant it. "We'll buy a drink."

Nora said, "Sure," and got up from the edge of the bed.

The big sandy man watched her go out of the room. He shook his head solemnly. His voice was solemn: "By God, sir, you're a lucky man." He suddenly held out his hand. "My name's Guild, John Guild."

"You know mine." We shook hands.

Nora came back with a siphon, a bottle of Scotch, and some glasses on a tray. She tried to give Morelli a drink, but Guild stopped her. "It's mighty kind of you, Mrs. Charles, but it's against the law to give a prisoner drinks or drugs except on a doctor's say-so." He looked at me. "Ain't that right?"

I said it was. The rest of us drank.

Presently Guild set down his empty glass and stood up. "I got to take this gun along with me, but don't you worry about that. We got plenty of time to talk when you're feeling better." He took Nora's hand and made an awkward bow over it. "I hope you didn't mind what I said back there awhile ago, but I meant it in a—"

Nora can smile very nicely. She gave him one of her nicest smiles. "Mind? I liked it."

She let the policemen and their prisoner out. Keyser had gone a few minutes before.

"He's sweet," she said when she came back from the door. "Hurt much?"

"No."

"It's pretty much my <sup>fault</sup> ~~fault~~, isn't it?"

"Nonsense. How about another drink?"

She poured me one. "I wouldn't take too many of these today."

"I won't," I promised. "I could do with some kippers for

breakfast. And, now our troubles seem to be over for a while, you might have them send up our absentee watchdog. And tell the operator not to give us any calls; there'll probably be reporters."

"What are you going to tell the police about Dorothy's pistol? You'll have to tell them something, won't you?"

"I don't know yet."

"Tell me the truth, Nick: have I been too silly?"

I shook my head. "Just silly enough."

She laughed, said, "You're a Greek louse," and went around to the telephone.

9

Nora said: "You're just showing off, that's all it is. And what for? I know bullets bounce off you. You don't have to prove it to me."

"It's not going to hurt me to get up."

"And it's not going to hurt you to stay in bed at least one day. The doctor said—"

"If he knew anything he'd cure his own snuffles." I sat up and put my feet on the floor. Asta tickled them with her tongue.

Nora brought me slippers and robe. "All right, hard guy, get up and bleed on the rugs."

I stood up cautiously and seemed to be all right as long as I went easy with my left arm and kept out of the way of Asta's front feet.

"Be reasonable," I said. "I didn't want to get mixed up with these people—still don't—but a fat lot of good that's doing me. Well, I can't just blunder out of it. I've got to see."

"Let's go away," she suggested. "Let's go to Bermuda or Havana for a week or two, or back to the Coast."

"I'd still have to tell the police some kind of story about that gun. And suppose it turns out to be the gun she was killed with? If they don't know already they're finding out."

"Do you really think it is?"

"That's guessing. We'll go there for dinner tonight and—"

"We'll do nothing of the kind. Have you gone completely

nuts? If you want to see anybody have them come here."

"It's not the same thing." I put my arms around her. "Stop worrying about this scratch. I'm all right."

"You're showing off," she said. "You want to let people see you're a hero who can't be stopped by bullets."

"Don't be nasty."

"I will be nasty. I'm not going to have you—"

I shut her mouth with a hand over it. "I want to see the Jorgensens together at home, I want to see Macaulay, and I want to see Studsy Burke. I've been pushed around too much. I've got to see about things."

"You're so damned pig-headed," she complained. "Well, it's only five o'clock. Lie down till it's time to dress."

I made myself comfortable on the living-room sofa. We had the afternoon papers sent up. Morelli, it seemed, had shot me—twice for one of the papers and three times for another—when I tried to arrest him for Julia Wolf's murder, and I was too near death to see anybody or to be moved to a hospital. There were pictures of Morelli and a thirteen-year-old one of me in a pretty funny-looking hat, taken, I remembered, when I was working on the Wall Street explosion. Most of the follow-up stories on the murder of Julia Wolf were rather vague. We were reading them when our little constant visitor, Dorothy Wynant, arrived.

I could hear her at the door when Nora opened it: "They wouldn't send my name up, so I sneaked up. Please don't send me away. I can help you nurse Nick. I'll do anything. Please, Nora."

Nora had a chance then to say: "Come on in."

Dorothy came in. She goggled at me. "B-but the papers said you—"

"Do I look like I'm dying? What's happened to you?" Her lower lip was swollen and cut near one corner, there was a bruise on one cheek-bone and two fingernail scratches down the other cheek, and her eyes were red and swollen.

"Mamma beat me," she said. "Look." She dropped her coat on the floor, tore off a button unbuttoning her dress, took an

arm out of its sleeve, and pushed the dress down to show her back. There were dark bruises on her arm, and her back was criss-crossed by long red welts. She was crying now. "See?"

Nora put an arm around her. "You poor kid."

"What'd she beat you for?" I asked.

She turned from Nora and knelt on the floor beside my sofa. Asta came over and nuzzled her. "She thought I came—came to see you about Father and Julia Wolf." Sobs broke up her sentences. "That's why she came over here—to find out—and you made her think I didn't. You—you made her think you didn't care anything about what happened—just like you made me—and she was all right till she saw the papers this afternoon. Then she knew—she knew you'd been lying about not having anything to do with it. She beat me to try to make me tell her what I'd told you."

"What'd you tell her?"

"I couldn't tell her anything. I—I couldn't tell her about Chris. I couldn't tell her anything."

"Was he there?"

"Yes."

"And he let her beat you like this?"

"But he—he never makes her stop."

I said to Nora: "For God's sake, let's have a drink."

Nora said, "Sure," picked up Dorothy's coat, laid it across the back of a chair, and went into the pantry.

Dorothy said: "Please let me stay here, Nick. I won't be any trouble, honestly, and you told me yourself I ought to walk out on them. You know you did, and I've got nowhere else to go. Please."

"Take it easy. This thing needs a little figuring out. I'm as much afraid of Mimi as you are, you know. What did she think you'd told me?"

"She must know something—something about the murder that she thinks I know—but I don't, Nick. Honest to God, I don't."

"That helps a lot," I complained. "But listen, sister: there are things you know and we're going to start with those. You come clean at and from the beginning—or we don't play."

She made a movement as if she were about to cross her heart. "I swear I will," she said.

"That'll be swell. Now let's drink." We took a glass apiece from Nora. "Tell her you were leaving for good?"

"No, I didn't say anything. Maybe she doesn't know yet I'm not in my room."

"That helps some."

"You're not going to make me go back?" she cried.

Nora said over her glass: "The child can't stay and be beaten like that, Nick."

I said: "Sh-h-h. I don't know. I was just thinking that if we're going there for dinner maybe it's better for Mimi not to know—"

Dorothy stared at me with horrified eyes while Nora said: "Don't think you're going to take me there now."

Then Dorothy spoke rapidly: "But Mamma doesn't expect you. I don't even know whether she'll be there. The papers said you were dying. She doesn't think you're coming."

"So much the better," I said. "We'll surprise them."

She put her face, white now, close to mine, spilling some of her drink on my sleeve in her excitement. "Don't go. You can't go there now. Listen to me. Listen to Nora. You can't go." She turned her white face around to look up at Nora. "Can he? Tell him he can't."

Nora, not shifting the focus of her dark eyes from my face, said: "Wait, Dorothy. He ought to know what's best. What is it, Nick?"

I made a face at her. "I'm just fumbling around. If you say Dorothy stays here, she stays. I guess she can sleep with Asta. But you've got to leave me alone on the rest of it. I don't know what I'm going to do because I don't know what's being done to me. I've got to find out. I've got to find out in my own way."

"We won't interfere," Dorothy said. "Will we, Nora?"

Nora continued to look at me, saying nothing.

I asked Dorothy: "Where'd you get that gun? And nothing out of books this time."

She moistened her lower lip and her face became pinker. She cleared her throat.

"Careful," I said. "If it's another piece of chewing-gum, I'll phone Mimi to come get you."

"Give her a chance," Nora said.

Dorothy cleared her throat again. "Can--can I tell you something that happened to me when I was a little child?"

"Has it got anything to do with the gun?"

"Not exactly, but it'll help you understand why I--"

"Not now. Some other time. Where'd you get the gun?"

"I wish you'd let me." She hung her head.

"Where'd you get the gun?"

Her voice was barely audible. "From a man in a speakeasy."

I said: "I knew we'd get the truth at last." Nora frowned and shook her head at me. "All right, say you did. What speakeasy?"

Dorothy raised her head. "I don't know. It was on Tenth Avenue, I think. Your friend Mr. Quinn would know. He took me there."

"You met him after you left us that night?"

"Yes."

"By accident, I suppose."

She looked reproachfully at me. "I'm trying to tell you the truth, Nick. I'd promised to meet him at a place called the Palma Club. He wrote the address down for me. So after I said good-night to you and Nora, I met him there and we went to a lot of places, winding up in this place where I got the gun. It was an awful tough place. You can ask him if I'm not telling the truth."

"Quinn get the gun for you?"

"No. He'd passed out then. He was sleeping with his head on the table. I left him there. They said they'd get him home all right."

"And the gun?"

"I'm coming to it." She began to blush. "He told me it was a gunman's hang-out. That's why I'd said let's go there. And after he went to sleep I got to talking to a man there, an awful tough-looking man. I was fascinated. And all the time I didn't



want to go home, I wanted to come back here, but I didn't know if you'd let me." Her face was quite red now and in her embarrassment she blurred her words. "So I thought perhaps if I—if you thought I was in a terrible fix—and, besides, that way I wouldn't feel so silly. Anyhow, I asked this awful tough-looking gangster, or whatever he was, if he would sell me a pistol or tell me where I could buy one. He thought I was kidding and laughed at first, but I told him I wasn't, and then he kept on grinning, but he said he'd see, and when he came back he said yes, he could get me one and asked how much I would pay for it. I didn't have much money, but I offered him my bracelet, but I guess he didn't think it was any good, because he said no, he'd have to have cash, so finally I gave him twelve dollars—all I had but a dollar for the taxi—and he gave me the pistol and I came over here and made up that about being afraid to go home because of Chris." She finished so rapidly her words ran together, and she sighed as if very glad to have finished.

"Then Chris hasn't been making passes at you?"

She bit her lip. "Yes, but not—not that bad." She put both hands on my arm, and her face almost touched mine. "You've got to believe me. I couldn't tell you all that, couldn't make myself out such a cheap little lying fool, if it wasn't the truth."

"It makes more sense if I don't believe you," I said. "Twelve bucks isn't enough money. We'll let that rest for a minute, though. Did you know Mimi was going to see Julia Wolf that afternoon?"

"No. I didn't even know she was trying to find my father then. They didn't say where they were going that afternoon."

"They?"

"Yes, Chris left the apartment with her."

"What time was that?"

She wrinkled her forehead. "It must've been pretty close to three o'clock—after two thirty, anyway—because I remember I was late for a date to go shopping with Elsie Hamilton and was hurrying into my clothes."

"They come back together?"

"I don't know. They were both home before I came."

"What time was that?"

"Some time after six. Nick, you don't think they— Oh, I remember something she said while she was dressing. I don't know what Chris said, but she said: 'When I ask her she'll tell me,' in that Queen-of-France way she talks sometimes. You know. I didn't hear anything else. Does that mean anything?"

"What'd she tell you about the murder when you came home?"

"Oh, just about finding her and how upset she was and about the police and everything."

"She seem very shocked?"

Dorothy shook her head. "No, just excited. You know Mamma." She stared at me for a moment, asked slowly: "You don't think she had anything to do with it?"

"What do you think?"

"I hadn't thought. I just thought about my father." A little later she said gravely: "If he did it, it's because he's crazy, but she'd kill somebody if she wanted to."

"It doesn't have to be either of them," I reminded her. "The police seem to have picked Morelli. What'd she want to find your father for?"

"For money. We're broke: Chris spent it all." She pulled down the corners of her mouth. "I suppose we all helped, but he spent most of it. Mamma's afraid he'll leave her if she hasn't any money."

"How do you know that?"

"I've heard them talk."

"Do you think he will?"

She nodded with certainty. "Unless she has money."

I looked at my watch and said: "The rest of it'll have to wait till we get back. You can stay here tonight, anyhow. Make yourself comfortable and have the restaurant send up your dinner. It's probably better if you don't go out."

She stared miserably at me and said nothing.

Nora patted her shoulder. "I don't know what he's doing, Dorothy, but if he says we ought to go there for dinner he probably knows what he's talking about. He wouldn't—"

Dorothy smiled and jumped up from the floor. "I believe you. I won't be silly any more."

I called the desk on the telephone and asked them to send up our mail. There were a couple of letters for Nora, one for me, some belated Christmas cards (including one from Larry Crowley, which was a copy of Haldeman-Julius Little Blue Book Number 1534, with "and a Merry Christmas," followed by Larry's name enclosed in a holly wreath, all printed in red under the book's title, *How to Test Your Urine at Home*), a number of telephone-call memoranda slips, and a telegram from Philadelphia:

NICK CHARLES

THE NORMANDIE NEW YORK N Y

WILL YOU COMMUNICATE WITH HERBERT MACAULAY TO  
DISCUSS TAKING CHARGE OF INVESTIGATION OF WOLF  
MURDER STOP AM GIVING HIM FULL INSTRUCTIONS STOP  
BEST REGARDS

CLYDE MILLER WYNANT

I put the telegram in an envelope with a note saying it had just reached me and sent it by messenger to the Police Department Homicide Bureau.

10

In the taxicab Nora asked: "You're sure you feel all right?"

"Sure."

"And this isn't going to be too much for you?"

"I'm all right. What'd you think of the girl's story?"

She hesitated. "You don't believe her, do you?"

"God forbid—at least till I've checked it up."

"You know more about this kind of thing than I do," she said, "but I think she was at least trying to tell the truth."

"A lot of the fancier yarns come from people who are trying to do that. It's not easy once you're out of the habit."

She said: "I bet you know a lot about human nature, Mr. Charles. Now don't you? Some time you must tell me about your experiences as a detective."

I said: "Buying a gun for twelve bucks in a speakeasy. Well, maybe, but. . ."

We rode a couple of blocks in silence. Then Nora asked: "What's really the matter with her?"

"Her old man's crazy: she thinks she is."

"How do you know?"

"You asked me. I'm telling you."

"You mean you're guessing?"

"I mean that's what's wrong with her; I don't know whether Wynant's actually nuts and I don't know whether she inherited any of it if he is, but she thinks both answers are yes, and it's got her doing figure eights."

When we stopped in front of the Courtland she said: "That's horrible, Nick. Somebody ought to—"

I said I didn't know: maybe Dorothy was right. "Likely as not she's making doll clothes for Asta right now."

We sent our names up to the Jorgensens and, after some delay, were told to go up. Mimi met us in the corridor when we stepped out of the elevator, met us with open arms and many words. "Those wretched newspapers. They had me frantic with their nonsense about your being at death's door. I phoned twice, but they wouldn't give me your apartment, wouldn't tell me how you were." She had both of my hands. "I'm so glad, Nick, that it was just a pack of lies, even if you will have to take pot luck with us tonight. Naturally I didn't expect you and— But you're pale. You really have been hurt."

"Not much," I said. "A bullet scraped my side, but it doesn't amount to anything."

"And you came to dinner in spite of that! That is flattering, but I'm afraid it's foolish too." She turned to Nora. "Are you sure it was wise to let him—"

"I'm not sure," Nora said, "but he wanted to come."

"Men are such idiots," Mimi said. She put an arm around me. "They either make mountains out of nothing or utterly neglect things that may— But come in. Here, let me help you."

"It's not that bad," I assured her, but she insisted on leading me to a chair and packing me in with half a dozen cushions.

Jorgensen came in, shook hands with me, and said he was glad to find me more alive than the newspapers had said. He

bowed over Nora's hand. "If I may be excused one little minute more I will finish the cocktails." He went out.

Mimi said: "I don't know where Dorry is. Off sulking somewhere, I suppose. You haven't any children, have you?"

Nora said: "No."

"You're missing a lot, though they can be a great trial sometimes." Mimi sighed. "I suppose I'm not strict enough. When I do have to scold Dorry she seems to think I'm a complete monster." Her face brightened. "Here's my other tot. You remember Mr. Charles, Gilbert. And this is Mrs. Charles."

Gilbert Wynant was two years younger than his sister, a gangling pale blond boy of eighteen with not too much chin under a somewhat slack mouth. The size of his remarkably clear blue eyes, and the length of the lashes, gave him a slightly effeminate look. I hoped he had stopped being the whining little nuisance he was as a kid.

Jorgensen brought in his cocktails, and Mimi insisted on being told about the shooting. I told her, making it even more meaningless than it had been.

"But why should he have come to you?" she asked.

"God knows. I'd like to know. The police'd like to know."

Gilbert said: "I read somewhere that when habitual criminals are accused of things they didn't do—even little things—they're much more upset by it than other people would be. Do you think that's so, Mr. Charles?"

"It's likely."

"Except," Gilbert added, "when it's something big, you know, something they would like to've done."

I said again it was likely.

Mimi said: "Don't be polite to Gil if he starts talking nonsense, Nick. His head's so cluttered up with reading. Get us another cocktail, darling."

He went over to get the shaker. Nora and Jorgensen were in a corner sorting phonograph records.

I said: "I had a wire from Wynant today."

Mimi looked warily around the room, then leaned forward, and her voice was almost a whisper: "What did he say?"

"Wanted me to find out who killed her. It was sent from Philadelphia this afternoon."

She was breathing heavily. "Are you going to do it?"

I shrugged. "I turned it over to the police."

Gilbert came back with the shaker. Jorgensen and Nora had put Bach's *Little Fugue* on the phonograph. Mimi quickly drank her cocktail and had Gilbert pour her another.

He sat down and said: "I want to ask you: can you tell dope-addicts by looking at them?" He was trembling.

"Very seldom. Why?"

"I was wondering. Even if they're confirmed addicts?"

"The further along they are, the better the chances of noticing that something's wrong, but you can't often be sure it's dope."

"Another thing," he said, "Gross says when you're stabbed you only feel a sort of push at the time and it's not until afterwards that it begins to hurt. Is that so?"

"Yes, if you're stabbed reasonably hard with a reasonably sharp knife. A bullet's the same way: you only feel the blow—and with a small-calibre steel-jacketed bullet not much of that—at first. The rest comes when the air gets to it."

Mimi drank her third cocktail and said: "I think you're both being indecently gruesome, especially after what happened to Nick today. Do try to find Dorry, Gil. You must know some of her friends. Phone them. I suppose she'll be along presently, but I worry about her."

"She's over at our place," I said.

"At your place?" Her surprise may have been genuine.

"She came over this afternoon and asked if she could stay with us awhile."

She smiled tolerantly and shook her head. "These youngsters!" She stopped smiling. "Awhile?"

I nodded. — *Verity's Place*

Gilbert, apparently waiting to ask me another question, showed no interest in this conversation between his mother and me.

Mimi smiled again and said: "I'm sorry she's bothering you and your wife, but it's a relief to know she's there instead of off the Lord only knows where. She'll have finished her pouting

by the time you get back. Send her along home, will you?" She poured me a cocktail. "You've been awfully nice to her."

I did not say anything.

Gilbert began: "Mr. Charles, do criminals—I mean professional criminals—usually—"

"Don't interrupt, Gil," Mimi said. "You will send her along home, won't you?" She was pleasant, but she was Dorothy's Queen of France.

"She can stay if she wants. Nora likes her."

She shook a crooked finger at me. "But I won't have you spoiling her like that. I suppose she told you all sorts of nonsense about me."

"She did say something about a beating."

"There you are," Mimi said complacently, as if that proved her point. "No, you'll have to send her home, Nick."

I finished my cocktail.

"Well?" she asked.

"She can stay with us if she wants, Mimi. We like having her."

"That's ridiculous. Her place is at home. I want her here." Her voice was a little sharp. "She's only a baby. You shouldn't encourage her foolish notions."

"I'm not doing anything. If she wants to stay, she stays."

Anger was a very pretty thing in Mimi's blue eyes. "She's my child and she's a minor. You've been very kind to her, but this isn't being kind to her or to me, and I won't have it. If you won't send her home, I'll take steps to bring her home. I'd rather not be disagreeable about it, but"—she leaned forward and deliberately spaced her words—"she's coming home."

I said: "You don't want to pick a fight with me, Mimi."

She looked at me as if she were going to say "I love you," and asked: "Is that a threat?"

"All right," I said, "have me arrested for kidnapping, contributing to the delinquency of a minor, and moperly."

She said suddenly in a harsh enraged voice: "And tell your wife to stop pawing my husband."

Nora, looking for another phonograph record with Jorgensen,

had a hand on his sleeve. They turned to look at Mimi in surprise.

I said: "Nora, Mrs. Jorgensen wants you to keep your hands off Mr. Jorgensen."

"I'm awfully sorry." Nora smiled at Mimi, then looked at me, put a very artificial expression of concern on her face, and in a somewhat sing-song voice, as if she were a schoolchild reciting a piece, said: "Oh, Nick, you're pale. I'm sure you have exceeded your strength and will have a relapse. I'm sorry, Mrs. Jorgensen, but I think I should get him home and to bed right away. You will forgive us, won't you?"

Mimi said she would. Everybody was the soul of politeness to everybody else. We went downstairs and got a taxicab.

"Well," Nora said, "so you talked yourself out of a dinner. What do you want to do now? Go home and eat with Dorothy?"

I shook my head. "I can do without Wynants for a little while. Let's go to Max's: I'd like some snails."

"Right. Did you find out anything?"

"Nothing."

She said meditatively: "It's a shame that guy's so handsome."

"What's he like?"

"Just a big doll. It's a shame."

We had dinner and went back to the Normandie. Dorothy was not there. I felt as if I had expected that.

Nora went through the rooms, called up the desk. No note, no message had been left for us.

"So what?" she asked.

It was not quite ten o'clock. "Maybe nothing," I said. "Maybe anything. My guess is she'll show up about three in the morning, tight, with a machine-gun she bought in Childs'."

Nora said: "To hell with her. Get into pyjamas and lie down."

## II

My side felt a lot better when Nora called me at noon the next day. "My nice policeman wants to see you," she said. "How do you feel?"



"Terrible. I must've gone to bed sober." I pushed Asta out of the way and got up.

Guild rose with a drink in his hand when I entered the living-room, and smiled all across his broad sandy face. "Well, well, Mr. Charles, you look spry enough this morning."

I shook hands with him and said yes I felt pretty good, and we sat down.

He frowned good-naturedly. "Just the same, you oughtn't've played that trick on me."

"Trick?"

"Sure, running off to see people when I'd put off asking you questions to give you a chance to rest up. I kind of figured that ought to give me first call on you, as you might say."

"I didn't think," I said. "I'm sorry. See that wire I got from Wynant?"

"Uh-huh. We're running it out in Philly."

"Now about that gun," I began, "I—"

He stopped me. "What gun? That ain't a gun any more. The firing pin's busted off, the guts are rusted and jammed. If anybody's fired it in six months—or could—I'm the Pope of Rome. Don't let's waste any time talking about that piece of junk."

I laughed. "That explains a lot. I took it away from a drunk who said he'd bought it in a speakeasy for twelve bucks. I believe him now."

"Somebody'll sell him the City Hall one of these days. Man to man, Mr. Charles, are you working on the Wolf job or ain't you?"

"You saw the wire from Wynant."

"I did. Then you ain't working for him. I'm still asking you."

"I'm not a private detective any more. I'm not any kind of a detective."

"I heard that. I'm still asking you."

"All right. No."

He thought for a moment, said: "Then let me put it another way: are you interested in the job?"

"I know the people, naturally I'm interested."

"And that's all?"

"Yes."

"And you don't expect to be working on it?"

The telephone rang and Nora went to answer it.

"To be honest with you, I don't know. If people keep on pushing me into it, I don't know how far they'll carry me."

Guild wagged his head up and down. "I can see that. I don't mind telling you I'd like to have you in on it—on the right side."

"You mean not on Wynant's side. Did he do it?"

"That I couldn't say, Mr. Charles, but I don't have to tell you he ain't helping us any to find out who did it."

Nora appeared in the doorway. "Telephone, Nick."

Herbert Macaulay was on the wire. "Hello, Charles. How's the wounded?"

"I'm all right, thanks."

"Did you hear from Wynant?"

"Yes."

"I got a letter from him saying he had wired you. Are you too sick to—"

"No, I'm up and around. If you'll be in your office late this afternoon I'll drop in."

"Swell," he said. "I'll be here till six."

I returned to the living-room. Nora was inviting Guild to have lunch while we had breakfast. He said it was mighty kind of her. I said I ought to have a drink before breakfast. Nora went to order meals and pour drinks.

Guild shook his head and said: "She's a mighty fine woman, Mr. Charles."

I nodded solemnly.

He said: "Suppose you should get pushed into this thing, as you say, I'd like it a lot more to feel you were working with us than against us."

"So would I."

"That's a bargain then," he said. He hunched his chair around a little. "I don't guess you remember me, but back when you were working this town I was walking beat on Forty-third Street."

"Of course," I said, lying politely. "I knew there was some-

thing familiar about— Being out of uniform makes a difference.”

“I guess it does. I’d like to be able to take it as a fact that you’re not holding out anything we don’t already know.”

“I don’t mean to. I don’t know what you know. I don’t know very much. I haven’t seen Macaulay since the murder and I haven’t even been following it in the newspapers.”

The telephone was ringing again. Nora gave us our drinks and went to answer it.

“What we know ain’t much of a secret,” Guild said, “and if you want to take the time to listen I don’t mind giving it to you.” He tasted his drink and nodded approvingly. “Only there’s a thing I’d like to ask first. When you went to Mrs. Jorgensen’s last night, did you tell her about getting the telegram from him?”

“Yes, and I told her I’d turned it over to you.”

“What’d she say?”

“Nothing. She asked questions. She’s trying to find him.”

He put his head a little to one side and partly closed one eye. “You don’t think there’s any chance of them being in cahoots, do you?” He held up a hand. “Understand I don’t know why they would be or what it’d be all about if they were, but I’m just asking.”

“Anything’s possible,” I said, “but I’d say it was pretty safe they aren’t working together. Why?”

“I guess you’re right.” Then he added vaguely: “But there’s a couple of points.” He sighed. “There always is. Well, Mr. Charles, here’s just about all we know for certain and if you can give us a little something more here and there as we go along I’ll be mighty thankful to you.”

I said something about doing my best.

“Well, along about the 3rd of last October Wynant tells Macaulay he’s got to leave town for a while. He don’t tell Macaulay where he’s going or what for, but Macaulay gets the idea that he’s off to work on some invention or other that he wants to keep quiet—and he gets it out of Julia Wolf later that he’s right—and he guesses Wynant’s gone off to hide somewhere in the Adirondacks, but when he asks her about that later

she says she don't know any more about it than he does."

"She know what the invention was?"

Guild shook his head. "Not according to Macaulay, only that it was probably something that he needed room for and machinery or things that cost money, because that's what he was fixing up with Macaulay. He was fixing it so Macaulay could get hold of his stocks and bonds and other things he owned and turn 'em into money when he wanted it and take care of his banking and everything just like Wynant himself."

"Power of attorney covering everything, huh?"

"Exactly. And listen, when he wanted money, he wanted it in cash."

"He was always full of screwy notions," I said.

"That's what everybody says. The idea seems to be he don't want to take any chances on anybody tracing him through checks, or anybody up there knowing he's Wynant. That's why he didn't take the girl along with him—didn't even let her know where he was, if she was telling the truth—and let his whiskers grow." With his left hand he stroked an imaginary beard.

"Up there," I quoted. "So he was in the Adirondacks?"

Guild moved one shoulder. "I just said that because that and Philadelphia are the only ideas anybody's given us. We're trying the mountains, but we don't know. Maybe Australia."

"And how much of this money in cash did Wynant want?"

"I can tell you that exactly." He took a wad of soiled, bent and dog-eared papers out of his pocket, selected an envelope that was a shade dirtier than most of the others, and stuffed the others back in his pocket. "The day after he talked to Macaulay he drew five thousand out of the bank himself, in cash. On the 28th—this is October, you understand—he had Macaulay get another five for him, and twenty-five hundred on the 6th of November, and a thousand on the 15th, and seventy-five hundred on the 30th, and fifteen hundred on the 6th—that would be December—and a thousand on the 18th, and five thousand on the 22nd, which was the day before she was killed."

"Nearly thirty thou," I said. "A nice bank balance he had."

"Twenty-eight thousand five hundred, to be exact." Guild

returned the envelope to his pocket. "But you understand it wasn't all in there. After the first call Macaulay would sell something every time to raise the dough." He felt in his pocket again. "I got a list of the stuff he sold, if you want to see it."

I said I didn't. "How'd he turn the money over to Wynant?"

"Wynant would write the girl when he wanted it, and she'd get it from Macaulay. He's got her receipts."

"And how'd she get it to Wynant?"

Guild shook his head. "She told Macaulay she used to meet him places he told her, but he thinks she knew where he was, though she always said she didn't."

"And maybe she still had that last five thousand on her when she was killed, huh?"

"Which might make it robbery, unless"—Guild's watery gray eyes were almost shut—"he killed her when he came there to get it."

"Or unless," I suggested, "somebody else who killed her for some other reason found the money there and thought they might as well take it along."

"Sure," he agreed. "Things like that happen all the time. It even happens sometimes that the first people that find a body like that pick up a little something before they turn in the alarm." He held up a big hand. "Of course, with Mrs. Jorgensen—a lady like that—I hope you don't think I'm—"

"Besides," I said, "she wasn't alone, was she?"

"For a little while. The phone in the apartment was out of whack, and the elevator boy rode the superintendent down to phone from the office. But get me right on this, I'm not saying Mrs. Jorgensen did anything funny. A lady like that wouldn't be likely—"

"What was the matter with the phone?" I asked.

The doorbell rang.

"Well," Guild said, "I don't know just what to make of it. The phone had—"

He broke off as a waiter came in and began to set a table.

"About the phone," Guild said when we were sitting at the

table, "I don't know just what to make of it, as I said. It had a bullet right smack through the mouthpiece of it."

"Accidental or—?"

"I'd just as lief ask you. It was from the same gun as the four that hit her, of course, but whether he missed her with that one or did it on purpose I don't know. It seems like a kind of noisy way to put a phone on the bum."

"That reminds me," I said, "didn't anybody hear all this shooting? A .32's not a shotgun, but somebody ought to've heard it."

"Sure," he said disgustedly. "The place is lousy with people that think they heard things now, but nobody did anything about it then, and God knows they don't get together much on what they think they heard."

"It's always like that," I said sympathetically.

"Don't I know it." He put a forkful of food in his mouth. "Where was I? Oh, yes, about Wynant. He gave up his apartment when he went away, and put his stuff in storage. We been looking through it—the stuff—but ain't found anything yet to show where he went or even what he was working on, which we thought maybe might help. We didn't have any better luck in his shop on First Avenue. It's been locked up too since he went away, except that she used to go down there for an hour or two once or twice a week to take care of his mail and things. There's nothing to tell us anything in the mail that's come since she got knocked off. We didn't find anything in her place to help." He smiled at Nora. "I guess this must be pretty dull to you, Mrs. Charles."

"Dull?" She was surprised. "I'm sitting on the edge of my chair."

"Ladies usually like more color," he said, and coughed, "kind of glamour. Anyways, we got nothing to show where he's been, only he phones Macaulay last Friday and says to meet him at two o'clock in the Plaza lobby. Macaulay wasn't in, so he just left the message."

"Macaulay was here," I said, "for lunch."

"He told me. Well. Macaulay don't get to the Plaza till nearly

three and he don't find any Wynant there and Wynant ain't registered there. He tries describing him, with and without a beard, but nobody at the Plaza remembers seeing him. He phones his office, but Wynant ain't called up again. And when he phones Julia Wolf and she tells him she don't even know Wynant's in town, which he figures is a lie, because he had just give her five thousand dollars for Wynant yesterday and figures Wynant's come for it, but he just says all right and hangs up and goes on about his business."

"His business such as what?" I asked.

Guild stopped chewing the piece of roll he had just bitten off. "I guess it wouldn't hurt to know, at that. I'll find out. There didn't seem to be anything pointing at him, so we didn't bother with that, but it don't ever hurt any to know who's got an alibi and who ain't."

I shook my head no at the question he had decided not to ask. "I don't see anything pointing at him, except that he's Wynant's lawyer and probably knows more than he's telling."

"Sure. I understand. Well, that's what people have lawyers for, I guess. Now about the girl: maybe Julia Wolf wasn't her real name at all. We ain't been able to find out for sure yet, but we have found out she wasn't the kind of dame you'd expect him to be trusting to handle all that dough—I mean if he knew about her."

"Had a record?"

He wagged his head up and down. "This is elegant stew. A couple of years before she went to work for him she did six months on a badger-game charge out West, in Cleveland, under the name of Rhoda Stewart."

"You suppose Wynant knew that?"

"Search me. Don't look like he'd turned her loose with that dough if he did, but you can't tell. They tell me he was kind of nuts about her, and you know how guys can go. She was running around off and on with this Shep Morelli and his boys too."

"Have you really got anything on him?" I asked.

"Not on this," he said regretfully, "but we wanted him for

a couple of other things." He drew his sandy brows together a little. "I wish I knew what sent him here to see you. Of course these junkies are likely to do anything, but I wish I knew."

"I told you all I knew."

"I'm not doubting that," he assured me. He turned to Nora. "I hope you don't think we were too rough with him, but you see you got to—"

Nora smiled and said she understood perfectly and filled his cup with coffee.

"Thank you, ma'am."

"What's a junkie?" she asked.

"Hop-head."

She looked at me. "Was Morelli—?"

"Primed to the ears," I said.

"Why didn't you tell me?" she complained. "I miss everything." She left the table to answer the telephone.

Guild asked: "You going to prosecute him for shooting you?"

"Not unless you need it."

He shook his head. His voice was casual, though there was some curiosity in his eyes. "I guess we got enough on him for a while."

"You were telling me about the girl."

"Yes," he said. "Well, we found out she's been spending a lot of nights away from her apartment—two or three days at a stretch sometimes. Maybe that's when she was meeting Wynant. I don't know. We ain't been able to knock any holes in Morelli's story of not seeing her for three months. What do you make of that?"

"The same thing you do," I replied. "It's just about three months since Wynant went off. Maybe it means something, maybe not."

Nora came in and said Harrison Quinn was on the telephone. He told me he had sold some bonds I was writing off losses on and gave me the prices.

"Have you seen Dorothy Wynant?" I asked.

"Not since I left her in your place, but I'm meeting her at the Palma for cocktails this afternoon. Come to think of it, she



told me not to tell you. How about that gold, Nick? You're missing something if you don't get in on it. Those wild men from the West are going to give us some kind of inflation as soon as Congress meets, that's certain, and even if they don't, everybody expects them to. As I told you last week, there's already talk of a pool being--"

"All right," I said and gave him an order to buy some Dome Mines at 12<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>.

He remembered then that he had seen something in the newspapers about my having been shot. He was pretty vague about it and paid very little attention to my assurances that I was all right. "I suppose that means no ping-pong for a couple of days," he said with what seemed genuine regret. "Listen: you've got tickets for the opening tonight. If you can't use them I'll be--"

"We're going to use them. Thanks just the same."

He laughed and said good-by.

A waiter was carrying away the table when I returned to the living-room. Guild had made himself comfortable on the sofa. Nora was telling him: "... have to go away over the Christmas holidays every year because what's left of my family make a fuss over them and if we're home they come to visit us or we have to visit them, and Nick doesn't like it." Asta was licking her paws in a corner.

Guild looked at his watch. "I'm taking up a lot of you folks' time. I didn't mean to impose--"

I sat down and said: "We were just about up to the murder, weren't we?"

"Just about." He relaxed on the sofa again. "That was on Friday the 23rd at some time before twenty minutes after three in the afternoon, which was the time Mrs. Jorgensen got there and found her. It's kind of hard to say how long she'd been laying there dying before she was found. The only thing we know is that she was all right and answered the phone--and the phone was all right--at about half past two, when Mrs. Jorgensen called her up and was still all right around three, when Macaulay phoned."

"I didn't know Mrs. Jorgensen phoned."

"It's a fact." Guild cleared his throat. "We didn't suspect anything there, you understand, but we checked it up just as a matter of course and found out from the girl at the switchboard at the Courtland that she put the call through Mrs. J. about two thirty."

"What did Mrs. J. say?"

"She said she called up to ask where she could find Wynant, but this Julia Wolf said she didn't know, so Mrs. J., thinking she's lying and maybe she can get her to tell the truth if she sees her, asks if she can drop in for a minute, and she says sure." He frowned at my right knee. "Well, she went there and found her. The apartment-house people don't remember seeing anybody going in or out of the Wolf apartment, but that's easy. A dozen people could do it without being seen. The gun wasn't there. There wasn't any signs of anybody busting in, and things in the place hadn't been disturbed any more than I've told you. I mean the place didn't look like it had been frisked. She had on a diamond ring that must've been worth a few hundred and there was thirty-some bucks in her bag. The people there know Wynant and Morelli—both of 'em have been in and out enough—but claim they ain't seen either for some time. The fire-escape window was locked and the fire-escape didn't look like it had been walked on recently." He turned his hands over, palms up. "I guess that's the crop."

"No fingerprints?"

"Hers, some belonging to the people that clean up the place, near as we can figure. Nothing any good to us."

"Nothing out of her friends?"

"She didn't seem to have any—not any close ones."

"How about the—what was his name?—Nunheim who identified her as a friend of Morelli's?"

"He just knew her by sight through seeing her around with Morelli and recognized her picture when he saw it in the paper."

"Who is he?"

"He's all right. We know all about him."

"You wouldn't hold out on *mé*, would you," I asked, "after getting me to promise not to hold out on you?"

Guild said: "Well, if it don't go any further, he's a fellow that does some work for the department now and then."

"Oh."

He stood up. "I hate to say it, but that's just about as far as we've got. You got anything you can help with?"

"No."

He looked at me steadily for a moment. "What do you think of it?"

"That diamond ring, was it an engagement ring?"

"She had it on that finger." After a pause he asked: "Why?"

"It might help to know who bought it for her. I'm going to see Macaulay this afternoon. If anything turns up I'll give you a ring. It looks like Wynant, all right, but—"

He growled good-naturedly, "Uh-huh, but," shook hands with Nora and me, thanked us for our whisky, our lunch, our hospitality, and our kindness in general, and went away.

I told Nora: "I'm not one to suggest that your charm wouldn't make any man turn himself inside out for you, but don't be too sure that guy isn't kidding us."

"So it's come to that," she said. "You're jealous of policemen."

12

Macaulay's letter from Clyde Wynant was quite a document. It was very badly typewritten on plain white paper and dated Philadelphia, Pa., December 26, 1932. It read:

*Dear Herbert:*

*I am telegraphing Nick Charles who worked for me you will remember some years ago and who is in New York to get in touch with you about the terrible death of poor Julia. I want you to do everything in your power to [a line had been x'd and m'd out here so that it was impossible to make anything at all of it] persuade him to find her murderer. I don't care what it costs—pay him!*

*Here are some facts I want you to give him outside of all you know about it yourself. I don't think he should tell these facts to the police, but he will know what is*

*best and I want him to have a completely free hand as I have got the utmost confidence in him. Perhaps you had better just show him this letter, after which I must ask you to carefully destroy it.*

*Here are the facts.*

*When I met Julia Thursday night to get that \$ 1000 from her she told me she wanted to quit her job. She said she hadn't been at all well for some time and her doctor had told her she ought to go away and rest and now that her uncle's estate had been settled she could afford to and wanted to do it. She had never said anything about bad health before and I thought she was hiding her real reason and tried to get it out of her, but she stuck to what she had said. I didn't know anything about her uncle dying either. She said it was her Uncle John in Chicago. I suppose that could be looked up if it's important. I couldn't persuade her to change her mind, so she was to leave the last day of the month. She seemed worried or frightened, but she said she wasn't. I was sorry at first that she was going, but then I wasn't, because I had always been able to trust her and now I wouldn't be if she was lying, as I thought she was.*

*The next fact I want Charles to know is that whatever anybody may think or whatever was true some time ago Julia and I ["are now" was x'd out lightly] were at the time of her murder and had been for more than a year not anything more to each other than employee and employer. This relationship was the result of mutual agreement.*

*Next, I believe some attempt should be made to learn the present whereabouts of the Sidney Kelterman with whom we had trouble some years ago inasmuch as the experiments I am now engaged in are in line with those he claimed I cheated him out of and I consider him quite insane enough to have killed Julia in a rage at her refusal to tell him where I could be found.*

*Fourth, and most important, has my divorced wife been*

*in communication with Kelterman? How did she learn I was carrying out the experiments with which he once assisted me?*

*Fifth, the police must be convinced at once that I can tell them nothing about the murder so that they will take no steps to find me—steps that might lead to a discovery of and a premature exposure of my experiments, which I would consider very dangerous at this time. This can best be avoided by clearing up the mystery of her murder immediately, and that is what I wish to have done.*

*I will communicate with you from time to time and if in the meanwhile anything should arise to make communication with me imperative insert the following advertisement in the Times:*

Abner. Yes. Bunny.

*I will thereupon arrange to get in touch with you.*

*I hope you sufficiently understand the necessity of persuading Charles to act for me, since he is already acquainted with the Kelterman trouble and knows most of the people concerned.*

*Yours truly,*

*Clyde Miller Wynant*

I put the letter down on Macaulay's desk and said: "It makes a lot of sense. Do you remember what his row with Kelterman was about?"

"Something about changes in the structure of crystals. I can look it up." Macaulay picked up the first sheet of the letter and frowned at it. "He says he got a thousand dollars from her that night. I gave her five thousand for him; she told me that's what he wanted."

"Four thousand from Uncle John's estate?" I suggested.

"Looks like it. That's funny: I never thought she'd gyp him. I'll have to find out about the other money I turned over to her."

"Did you know she'd done a jail sentence in Cleveland on a badger-game charge?"

"No. Had she really?"

"According to the police—under the name of Rhoda Stewart. Where'd Wynant find her?"

He shook his head. "I've no idea."

"Know anything about where she came from originally, relatives, things like that?"

He shook his head again.

"Who was she engaged to?" I asked.

"I didn't know she was engaged."

"She was wearing a diamond ring on that finger."

"That's news to me," he said. He shut his eyes and thought. "No, I can't remember ever noticing an engagement ring." He put his forearms on his desk and grinned over them at me. "Well, what are the chances of getting you to do what he wants?"

Q "Slim."

"I thought so." He moved a hand to touch the letter. "You know as much about how he feels as I do. What would make you change your mind?"

"I don't—"

"Would it help any if I could persuade him to meet you? Maybe if I told him that was the only way you'd take it—"

"I'm willing to talk to him," I said, "but he'd have to talk a lot straighter than he's writing."

Macaulay asked slowly: "You mean you think he may have killed her?"

"I don't know anything about that," I said. "I don't know as much as the police do, and it's a cinch they haven't got enough on him to make the pinch even if they could find him."

Macaulay sighed. "Being a goof's lawyer is not much fun. I'll try to make him listen to reason, but I know he won't."

"I meant to ask, how are his finances these days? Is he as well fixed as he used to be?"

"Almost. The depression's hurt him some, along with the rest of us, and the royalties from his smelting process have gone pretty much to hell now that the metals are dead, but he can still count on fifty or sixty thousand a year from his glassine and soundproofing patents, with a little more coming in from odds

and ends like—" He broke off to ask: "You're not worrying about his ability to pay whatever you'd ask?"

"No, I was just wondering." I thought of something else: "Has he any relatives outside of his ex-wife and children?"

"A sister, Alice Wynant, that hasn't been on speaking terms with him for—it must be four or five years now."

I supposed that was the Aunt Alice the Jorgensens had not gone to see Christmas afternoon. "What'd they fall out about?" I asked.

"He gave an interview to one of the papers saying he didn't think the Russian Five Year Plan was necessarily doomed to failure. Actually he didn't make it much stronger than that."

I laughed. "They're a—"

"She's even better than he is. She can't remember things. The time her brother had his appendix out, she and Mimi were in a taxi going to see him the first afternoon and they passed a hearse coming from the direction of the hospital. Miss Alice turned pale and grabbed Mimi by the arm and said: 'Oh, dear! If that should be what's-his-name!'"

"Where does she live?"

"On Madison Avenue. It's in the phone book." He hesitated. "I don't think—"

"I'm not going to bother her." Before I could say anything else his telephone began to ring.

He put the receiver to his ear and said: "Hello. . . . Yes, speaking. . . . Who? . . . Oh, yes. . . ." Muscles tightened around his mouth, and his eyes opened a little wider. "Where?" He listened some more. "Yes, surely. Can I make it?" He looked at the watch on his left wrist. "Right. See you on the train." He put the telephone down. "That was Lieutenant Guild," he told me. "Wynant's tried to commit suicide in Allentown, Pennsylvania."

### 13

Dorothy and Quinn were at the bar when I went into the Palma Club. They did not see me until I came up beside Dorothy and said: "Hello, folks." Dorothy had on the same clothes I had last seen her in.

She looked at me and at Quinn and her face flushed. "You had to tell him."

"The girl's in a pet," Quinn said cheerfully. "I got that stock for you. You ought to pick up some more and what are you drinking?"

"Old-fashioned. You're a swell guest—ducking out without leaving a word behind you."

Dorothy looked at me again. The scratches on her face were pale, the bruise barely showed, and her mouth was no longer swollen. "I trusted you," she said. She seemed about to cry.

"What do you mean by that?"

"You know what I mean. Even when you went to dinner at Mamma's I trusted you."

"And why not?"

Quinn said: "She's been in a pet all afternoon. Don't bait her." He put a hand on one of hers. "There, there, darling, don't you—"

"Please shut up." She took her hand away from him. "You know very well what I mean," she told me. "You and Nora both made fun of me to Mamma and—"

I began to see what had happened. "She told you that and you believed it?" I laughed. "After twenty years you're still a sucker for her lies? I suppose she phoned you after we left: we had a row and didn't stay long."

She hung her head and said, "Oh, I am a fool," in a low miserable voice. Then she grabbed me by both arms and said: "Listen, let's go over and see Nora now. I've got to square myself with her. I'm such an ass. It'd serve me right if she never—"

"Sure. There's plenty of time. Let's have this drink first."

Quinn said: "Brother Charles, I'd like to shake your hand. You've brought sunshine back into the life of our little tot and joy to—" He emptied his glass. "Let's go over and see Nora. The booze there is just as good and costs us less."

"Why don't you stay here?" she asked him.

He laughed and shook his head. "Not me. Maybe you can get Nick to stay here, but I'm going with you. I've put up with



your snottiness all afternoon: now I'm going to bask in the sunshine."

Gilbert Wynant was with Nora when we reached the Normandie. He kissed his sister and shook hands with me and, when he had been introduced, Harrison Quinn.

Dorothy immediately began to make long and earnest and none too coherent apologies to Nora.

Nora said: "Stop it. There's nothing to forgive. If Nick's told you I was sore or hurt or anything of the sort he's just a Greek liar. Let me take your coat."

Quinn turned on the radio. At the stroke of the gong it was five thirty-one and one quarter, Eastern Standard Time.

Nora told Quinn, "Play bar-tender: you know where the stuff is," and followed me into the bathroom. "Where'd you find her?"

"In a speak. What's Gilbert doing here?"

"He came over to see her, so he said. She didn't go home last night and he thought she was still here." She laughed. "He wasn't surprised at not finding her, though. He said she was always wandering off somewhere, she has dromomania, which comes from a mother fixation and is very interesting. He said Stekel claims people who have it usually show kleptomaniac impulses too, and he's left things around to see if she'd steal them, but she never has yet that he knows of."

"He's quite a lad. Did he say anything about his father?"

"No."

"Maybe he hadn't heard. Wynant tried to commit suicide down in Allentown. Guild and Macaulay have gone down to see him. I don't know whether to tell the youngsters or not. I wonder if Mimi had a hand in his coming over here."

"I wouldn't think so, but if you do--"

"I'm just wondering," I said. "Has he been here long?"

"About an hour. He's a funny kid. He's studying Chinese and writing a book on Knowledge and Belief—not in Chinese—and thinks Jack Oakie's very good."

"So do I. Are you tight?"

"Not very."

When we returned to the living-room, Dorothy and Quinn were dancing to *Eadie Was a Lady*.

Gilbert put down the magazine he was looking at and politely said he hoped I was recovering from my injury.

I said I was.

"I've never been hurt, really hurt," he went on, "that I can remember. I've tried hurting myself, of course, but that's not the same thing. It just made me uncomfortable and irritable and sweat a lot."

"That's pretty much the same thing," I said.

"Really? I thought there'd be more--well, more to it." He moved a little closer to me. "It's things like that I don't know. I'm so horribly young I haven't had a chance to-- Mr. Charles, if you're too busy or don't want to, I hope you'll say so, but I'd appreciate it very much if you'd let me talk to you some time when there aren't a lot of people around to interrupt us. There are so many things I'd like to ask you, things I don't know anybody else could tell me and--"

"I'm not so sure about that," I said, "but I'll be glad to try any time you want."

"You really don't mind? You're not just being polite?"

"No, I mean it, only I'm not sure you'll get as much help as you expect. It depends on what you want to know."

"Well, things like cannibalism," he said. "I don't mean in places like Africa and New Guinea--in the United States, say. Is there much of it?"

"Not nowadays. Not that I know of."

"Then there was once?"

"I don't know how much, but it happened now and then before the country was completely settled. Wait a minute: I'll give you a sample." I went over to the bookcase and got the copy of Duke's *Celebrated Criminal Cases of America* that Nora had picked up in a second-hand-book store, found the place I wanted, and gave it to him. "It's only three or four pages."

ALFRED G. PACKER, THE "MANEATER," WHO MURDERED HIS FIVE COMPANIONS IN THE MOUNTAINS OF COLORADO, ATE THEIR BODIES AND STOLE THEIR MONEY.

In the fall of 1873 a party of twenty daring men left Salt Lake City, Utah, to prospect in the San Juan country. Having heard glowing accounts of the fortunes to be made, they were light-hearted and full of hope as they started on their journey, but as the weeks rolled by and they beheld nothing but barren wastes and snowy mountains, they grew despondent. The further they proceeded, the less inviting appeared the country, and they finally became desperate when it appeared that their only reward would be starvation and death.

Just as the prospectors were about to give up in despair, they saw an Indian camp in the distance, and while they had no assurance as to what treatment they would receive at the hands of the "Reds," they decided that any death was preferable to starvation, so they agreed to take a chance.

When they approached the camp they were met by an Indian who appeared to be friendly and escorted them to Chief Ouray. To their great surprise, the Indians treated them with every consideration and insisted upon their remaining in the camp until they had fully recuperated from their hardships.

Finally the party decided to make another start, with the Los Pinos Agency as their goal. Ouray attempted to dissuade them from continuing the journey, and did succeed in influencing ten of the party to abandon the trip and return to Salt Lake. The other ten determined to continue, so Ouray supplied them with provisions and admonished them to follow the Gunnison River, which was named after Lieutenant Gunnison, who was murdered in 1852. (See life of Joe Smith, the Mormon.)

Alfred G. Packer, who appeared as the leader of the party which continued the journey, boasted of his know-

ledge of the topography of the country and expressed confidence in his ability to find his way without difficulty. When his party had traveled a short distance, Packer told them that rich mines had recently been discovered near the headwaters of the Rio Grande River, and he offered to guide the party to the mines.

Four of the party insisted that they follow Ouray's instructions, but Packer persuaded five men, named Swan, Miller, Noon, Bell and Humphreys, to accompany him to the mines, while the other four proceeded along the river.

Of the party of four, two died from starvation and exposure, but the other two finally reached the Los Pinos Agency in February, 1874, after enduring indescribable hardships. General Adams was in command of this agency, and the unfortunate men were treated with every consideration. When they regained their strength they started back to civilization.

In March, 1874, General Adams was called to Denver on business, and one cold, blizzardy morning, while he was still away, the employees of the Agency, who were seated at the breakfast table, were startled by the appearance at the door of a wild-looking man who begged piteously for food and shelter. His face was frightfully bloated but otherwise he appeared to be in fairly good condition, although his stomach would not retain the food given him. He stated that his name was Packer and claimed that his five companions had deserted him while he was ill, but had left a rifle with him which he brought into the Agency.

After partaking of the hospitality of the employees at the Agency for ten days, Packer proceeded to a place called Saquache, claiming that he intended to work his way to Pennsylvania, where he had a brother. At Saquache, Packer drank heavily and appeared to be well supplied with money. While intoxicated, he told many conflicting stories regarding the fate of his companions, and it was suspected that he had disposed of his erstwhile associates by foul means.

At this time General Adams stopped at Saquache on his return from Denver to the Agency, and while at the home of Otto Mears he was advised to arrest Packer and investigate his movements. The General decided to take him back to the Agency, and while en route they stopped at the cabin of Major Downey, where they met the ten men who listened to the Indian chief and abandoned the trip. It was then proven that a great part of Packer's statement was false, so the General decided that the matter required a complete investigation, and Packer was bound and taken to the Agency, where he was held in close confinement.

On April 2, 1874, two wildly excited Indians ran into the Agency, holding strips of flesh in their hands which they called "white man's meat," and which they stated they found just outside the Agency. As it had been lying on the snow and the weather had been extremely cold, it was still in good condition.

When Packer caught sight of the exhibits, his face became livid, and with a low moan he sank to the floor. Restoratives were administered and after pleading for mercy, he made a statement substantially as follows:

"When I and five others left Ouray's camp, we estimated that we had sufficient provisions for the long and arduous journey before us, but our food rapidly disappeared and we were soon on the verge of starvation. We dug roots from the ground upon which we subsisted for some days, but as they were not nutritious and as the extreme cold had driven all animals and birds to shelter, the situation became desperate. Strange looks came into the eyes of each of the party and they all became suspicious of each other. One day I went out to gather wood for the fire and when I returned I found that Mr. Swan, the oldest man in the party, had been struck on the head and killed, and the remainder of the party were in the act of cutting up the body preparatory to eating it. His money, amounting to \$ 2000.00, was divided among the remainder of the party

"This food only lasted a few days, and I suggested that Miller be the next victim because of the large amount of flesh he carried. His skull was split open with a hatchet as he was in the act of picking up a piece of wood. Humphreys and Noon were the next victims. Bell and I then entered into a solemn compact that as we were the only ones left we would stand by each other whatever befell, and rather than harm each other we would die of starvation. One day Bell said, 'I can stand it no longer,' and he rushed at me like a famished tiger, at the same time attempting to strike me with his gun. I parried the blow and killed him with a hatchet. I then cut his flesh into strips which I carried with me as I pursued my journey. When I espied the Agency from the top of the hill, I threw away the strips I had left, and I confess I did so reluctantly as I had grown fond of human flesh, especially that portion around the breast."

After relating this gruesome story, Packer agreed to guide a party in charge of H. Lauter to the remains of the murdered men. He led them to some high, inaccessible mountains, and as he claimed to be bewildered, it was decided to abandon the search and start back the next day.

That night Packer and Lauter slept side by side, and during the night Packer assaulted him with the intent to commit murder and escape, but he was overpowered, bound, and after the party reached the Agency, he was turned over to the Sheriff.

Early in June of that year, an artist named Reynolds, from Peoria, Ill., while sketching along the shores of Lake Christoval, discovered the remains of the five men lying in a grove of hemlocks. Four of the bodies were lying together in a row, and the fifth, minus the head, was found a short distance away. The bodies of Bell, Swan, Humphreys and Noon had rifle bullet wounds in the back of the head, and when Miller's head was found it was crushed in, evidently by a blow from a rifle which was lying near by, the stock being broken from the barrel.

The appearance of the bodies clearly indicated that Packer had been guilty of cannibalism as well as murder. He probably spoke the truth when he stated his preference for the breast of man, as in each instance the entire breast was cut away to the ribs.

A beaten path was found leading from the bodies to a near-by cabin, where blankets and other articles belonging to the murdered men were discovered, and everything indicated that Packer lived in this cabin for many days after the murders, and that he made frequent trips to the bodies for his supply of human meat.

After these discoveries the Sheriff procured warrants charging Packer with five murders, but during his absence the prisoner escaped.

Nothing was heard of him again until January 29, 1883, nine years later, when General Adams received a letter from Cheyenne, Wyoming, in which a Salt Lake prospector stated that he had met Packer face to face in that locality. The informant stated that the fugitive was known as John Schwartze, and was suspected of being engaged in operations with a gang of outlaws.

Detectives began an investigation, and on March 12, 1883, Sheriff Sharpless of Laramie County arrested Packer, and on the 17th inst. Sheriff Smith of Hinsdale County brought the prisoner back to Lake City, Col.

His trial on the charge of murdering Israel Swan in Hinsdale County on March 1, 1874, was begun on April 3, 1883. It was proven that each member of the party except Packer possessed considerable money. The defendant repeated his former statement, wherein he claimed that he had only killed Bell, and had done so in self-defense.

On April 13, the jury found the defendant guilty with the death penalty attached. A stay of execution was granted to Packer, who immediately appealed to the Supreme Court. In the meantime he was transferred to the Gunnison jail to save him from mob violence.

In October, 1885, the Supreme Court granted a new trial and it was then decided to bring him to trial on five charges of manslaughter. He was found guilty on each charge and was sentenced to serve eight years for each offense, making a total of forty years.

He was pardoned on January 1, 1901, and died on a ranch near Denver on April 24, 1907.

While Gilbert was reading this, I got myself a drink. Dorothy stopped dancing to join me. "Do you like him?" she asked, jerking her head to indicate Quinn.

"He's all right."

"Maybe, but he can be terribly silly. You didn't ask me where I stayed last night. Don't you care?"

"It's none of my business."

"But I found out something for you."

"What?"

"I stayed at Aunt Alice's. She's not exactly right in the head, but she's awfully sweet. She told me she had a letter from my father today warning her against Mamma."

"Warning her how? Just what did he say?"

"I didn't see it. Aunt Alice has been mad with him for several years and she tore it up. She says he's become a Communist and she's sure the Communists killed Julia Wolf and will kill him in the end. She thinks it's all over some secret they betrayed."

I said: "Oh my God!"

"Well, don't blame me. I'm just telling you what she told me. I told you she wasn't exactly right in the head."

"Did she tell you that junk was in the letter?"

Dorothy shook her head. "No. She only said the warning was. As near as I remember she said he wrote her not to trust Mamma under any circumstances and not to trust anybody connected with her, which I suppose means all of us."

"Try to remember more."

"But there wasn't any more. That's all she told me."

"Where was the letter from?" I asked.



"She didn't know—except that it had come air-mail. She said she wasn't interested."

"What did she think of it? I mean, did she take the warning seriously?"

"She said he was a dangerous radical—they're her very words—and she wasn't interested in anything he had to say."

"How seriously do you take it?"

She stared at me for a long moment and she moistened her lips before she spoke. "I think he—"

Gilbert, book in hand, came over to us. He seemed disappointed in the story I had given him. "It's very interesting," he said, "but, if you know what I mean, it's not a pathological case." He put an arm around his sister's waist. "It was more a matter of that or starving."

"Not unless you want to believe him," I said.

Dorothy asked: "What is it?"

"A thing in the book," Gilbert replied.

"Tell him about the letter your aunt got," I said to Dorothy. She told him.

When she had finished, he grimaced impatiently. "That's silly. Mamma's not really dangerous. She's just a case of arrested development. Most of us have outgrown ethics and morals and so on. Mamma's just not grown up to them yet." He frowned and corrected himself thoughtfully: "She might be dangerous, but it would be like a child playing with matches."

Nora and Quinn were dancing.

"And what do you think of your father?" I asked.

Gilbert shrugged. "I haven't seen him since I was a child. I've got a theory about him, but a lot of it's guess-work. I'd like—the chief thing I'd like to know is if he's impotent."

I said: "He tried to kill himself today, down in Allentown."

Dorothy cried, "He didn't," so sharply that Quinn and Nora stopped dancing, and she turned and thrust her face up at her brother's. "Where's Chris?" she demanded.

Gilbert looked from her face to mine and quickly back to hers. "Don't be an ass," he said coldly. "He's off with that girl of his, that Fenton girl."

Dorothy did not look as if she believed him.

"She's jealous of him," he explained to me. "It's that mother fixation."

I asked: "Did either of you ever see the Sidney Keltzman your father had trouble with back when I first knew you?"

Dorothy shook her head. Gilbert said: "No. Why?"

"Just an idea I had. I never saw him either, but the description they gave me, with some easy changes, could be made to fit your Chris Jorgensen."

14

That night Nora and I went to the opening of the Radio City Music Hall, decided we had had enough of the performance after an hour, and left. "Where to?" Nora asked.

"I don't care. Want to hunt up that Pigiron Club that Morelli told us about? You'll like Studsy Burke. He used to be a safe-burglar. He claims to've cracked the safe in the Hagerstown jail while he was doing thirty days there for disorderly conduct."

"Let's," she said.

We went down to Forty-ninth Street and, after asking two taxi-drivers, two newsboys, and a policeman, found the place. The doorman said he didn't know about any Burkes, but he'd see. Studsy came to the door. "How are you, Nick?" he said. "Come on in."

He was a powerfully built man of medium height, a little fat now, but not soft. He must have been at least fifty, but looked ten years younger than that. He had a broad, pleasantly ugly, pockmarked face under not much hair of no particular color, and even his baldness could not make his forehead seem large. His voice was a deep bass growl.

I shook hands with him and introduced him to Nora.

"A wife," he said. "Think of that. By God, you'll drink champagne or you'll fight me."

I said we wouldn't fight and we went inside. His place had a comfortably shabby look. It was between hours: there were only three customers in the place. We sat at a table in a corner and Studsy told the waiter exactly which bottle of wine to

bring. Then he examined me carefully and nodded. "Marriage done you good." He scratched his chin. "It's a long time I don't see you."

"A long time," I agreed.

"He sent me up the river," he told Nora.

She clucked sympathetically. "Was he a good detective?"

Studsy wrinkled what forehead he had. "Folks say, but I don't know. The once he caught me was an accident: I led with my right."

"How come you sicked this wild man Morelli on me?" I asked.

"You know how foreigners are," he said; "they're hysterical. I don't know he's going to do nothing like that. He's worrying about the coppers trying to hang that Wolf dame's killing on him and we see in the paper you got something to do with it and I say to him, 'Nick might not maybe sell his own mother out and you feel like you got to talk to somebody,' so he says he will. What'd you do, make faces at him?"

"He let himself be spotted sneaking in and then blamed me for it. How'd he find me?"

"He's got friends and you wasn't hiding, was you?"

"I'd only been in town a week and there was nothing in the paper saying where I was staying."

"Is that so?" Studsy asked with interest. "Where you been?"

"I live in San Francisco now. How'd he find me?"

"That's a swell town. I ain't been there in years, but it's one swell town. I oughtn't tell you, Nick. Ask him. It's his business."

"Except that you sent him to me."

"Well, yes," he said, "except that, of course; but then, see, I was putting in a boost for you." He said it seriously.

I said: "My pal."

"How did I know he was going to blow his top? Anyways, he didn't hurt you much, did he?"

"Maybe not, but it didn't do me any good and I—" I stopped as the waiter arrived with the champagne. We tasted it and said it was swell. It was pretty bad. "Think he killed the girl?" I asked.

Studsy shook his head sidewise with certainty. "No chance."  
"He's a fellow you can persuade to shoot," I said.

"I know—these foreigners are hysterical—but he was around here all that afternoon."

"All?"

"All. I'll take my oath to it. Some of the boys and girls were celebrating upstairs and I know for a fact he wasn't off his hip, let alone out of here, all afternoon. No kidding, that's a thing he can prove."

"Then what was he worried about?"

"Do I know? Ain't that what I been asking him myself? But you know how these foreigners are."

I said: "Uh-huh. They're hysterical. He wouldn't've sent a friend around to see her, would he?"

"I think you got the boy wrong," Studsy said. "I knew the dame. She used to come in here with him sometimes. They was just playing. He wasn't nuts enough about her that he'd have any reason for weighting her down like that. On the level."

"Was she on the stuff too?"

"I don't know. I seen her take it sometimes, but maybe she was just being sociable, taking a shot because he did."

"Who else did she play around with?"

"Nobody I know," Studsy replied indifferently. "There was a rat named Nunheim used to come in here that was on the make for her, but he didn't get nowhere that I could see."

"So that's where Morelli got my address."

"Don't be silly. All Morelli'd want of him would be a crack at him. What's it to him telling the police Morelli knew the dame? A friend of yours?"

I thought it over and said: "I don't know him. I hear he does chores for the police now and then."

"M-m-m. Thanks."

"Thanks for what? I haven't said anything."

"Fair enough. Now you tell me something: what's all this fiddlededee about, huh? That guy Wynant killed her, didn't he?"

"A lot of people think so," I said, "but fifty bucks'll get you a hundred he didn't."

He shook his head. "I don't bet with you in your own racket"—his face brightened—"but I tell you what I will do and we can put some dough on it if you want. You know that time you copped me, I did lead with my right like I said, and I always wondered if you could do it again. Some time when you're feeling well I'd like—"

I laughed and said: "No, I'm all out of condition."

"I'm hog-fat myself," he insisted.

"Besides, that was a fluke: you were off balance and I was set."

"You're just trying to let me down easy," he said, and then more thoughtfully, "though I guess you did get the breaks at that. Well, if you won't— Here, let me fill your glasses."

Nora decided that she wanted to go home early and sober, so we left Studsy and his Pigiron Club at a little after eleven o'clock. He escorted us to a taxicab and shook our hands vigorously. "This has been a fine pleasure," he told us.

We said equally polite things and rode away.

Nora thought Studsy was marvelous. "Half his sentences I can't understand at all."

"He's all right."

"You didn't tell him you'd quit gum-shoeing."

"He'd've thought I was trying to put something over on him," I explained. "To a mugg like him, once a sleuth always a sleuth, and I'd rather lie to him than have him think I'm lying. Have you got a cigarette? He really trusts me, in a way."

"Were you telling the truth when you said Wynant didn't kill her?"

"I don't know. My guess is I was."

At the Normandie there was a telegram for me from Macaulay in Allentown:

MAN HERE IS NOT WYNANT AND  
DID NOT TRY TO COMMIT SUICIDE

I had a stenographer in the next morning and got rid of most of the mail that had been accumulating; had a telephone conversation with our lawyer in San Francisco—we were trying to keep one of the mill's customers from being thrown into bankruptcy; spent an hour going over a plan we had for lowering our state taxes; was altogether the busy business man, and felt pretty virtuous by two o'clock, when I knocked off work for the day and went out to lunch with Nora.

She had a date to play bridge after lunch. I went down to see Guild: I had talked to him on the telephone earlier in the day.

"So it was a false alarm?" I said after we had shaken hands and made ourselves comfortable in chairs.

"That's what it was. He wasn't any more Wynant than I am. You know how it is: we told the Philly police he'd sent a wire from there and broadcasted his description, and for the next week anybody that's skinny and maybe got whiskers is Wynant to half of the State of Pennsylvania. This was a fellow named Barlow, a carpenter out of work as near as we can figure out, that got shot by a nigger trying to stick him up. He can't talk much yet."

"He couldn't've been shot by somebody who made the same mistake the Allentown police did?" I asked.

"You mean thought he was Wynant? I guess that could be—if it helps any. Does it?"

I said I didn't know. "Did Macaulay tell you about the letter he got from Wynant?"

"He didn't tell me what was in it."

I told him. I told him what I knew about Kelterman.

He said: "Now, that's interesting."

I told him about the letter Wynant had sent his sister.

He said: "He writes a lot of people, don't he?"

"I thought of that." I told him Sidney Kelterman's description with a few easy changes would fit Christian Jorgensen.

He said: "It don't hurt any to listen to a man like you. Don't let me stop you."

I told him that was the crop.

He rocked back in his chair and screwed his pale gray eyes up at the ceiling. "There's some work to be done there," he said presently.

"Was this fellow in Allentown shot with a .32?" I asked.

Guild stared curiously at me for a moment, then shook his head. "A .44. You got something on your mind?"

"No. Just chasing the set-up around in my head."

He said, "I know what that is," and leaned back to look at the ceiling some more. When he spoke again it was as if he was thinking of something else. "That alibi of Macaulay's you was asking about is all right. He was late for a date then and we know for a fact he was in a fellow's office named Hermann on Fifty-seventh Street from five minutes after three till twenty after, the time that counts."

"What's the five minutes after three?"

"That's right, you don't know about that. Well, we found a fellow named Caress with a cleaning and dyeing place on First Avenue that called her up at five minutes after three to ask her if she had any work for him, and she said no and told him she was liable to go away. So that narrows the time down to from three five to three twenty. You ain't really suspicious of Macaulay?"

"I'm suspicious of everybody," I said. "Where were you between three five and three twenty?"

He laughed. "As a matter of fact," he said, "I'm just about the only one of the lot that ain't got an alibi. I was at the moving pictures."

"The rest of them have?"

He wagged his head up and down. "Jorgensen left his place with Mrs. Jorgensen—that was about five minutes to three—and sneaked over on West Seventy-third Street to see a girl named Olga Fenton—we promised not to tell his wife—and stayed there till about five. We know what Mrs. Jorgensen did. The daughter was dressing when they left and she took a taxi at a quarter past and went straight to Bergdorf-Goodman's. The son was in the Public Library all afternoon—Jesus, he reads funny books.

Morelli was in a joint over in the Forties." He laughed. "And where was you?"

"I'm saving mine till I really need it. None of those look too air-tight, but legitimate alibis seldom do. How about Nunheim?"

Guild seemed surprised. "What makes you think of him?"

"I hear he had a yen for the girl."

"And where'd you hear it?"

"I heard it."

He scowled. "Would you say it was reliable?"

"Yes."

"Well," he said slowly, "he's one guy we can check up on. But look here, what do you care about these people? Don't you think Wynant done it?"

I gave him the same odds I had given Studsy: "Twenty-five'll get you fifty he didn't."

He scowled at me over that for a long silent moment, then said: "That's an idea, anyways. Who's your candidate?"

"I haven't got that far yet. Understand, I don't know anything. I'm not saying Wynant didn't do it. I'm just saying everything doesn't point at him."

"And saying it two to one. What don't point at him?"

"Call it a hunch, if you want," I said, "but—"

"I don't want to call it anything," he said. "I think you're a smart detective. I want to listen to what you got to say."

"Mostly I've got questions to say. For instance, how long was it from the time the elevator boy let Mrs. Jorgensen off at the Wolf girl's floor until she rang for him and said she heard groans?"

Guild pursed his lips, opened them to ask, "You think she might've—?" and left the rest of the question hanging in the air.

"I think she might've. I'd like to know where Nunheim was. I'd like to know the answers to the questions in Wynant's letter. I'd like to know where the four-thousand-dollar difference between what Macaulay gave the girl and what she seems to have given Wynant went. I'd like to know where her engagement ring came from."

"We're doing the best we can," Guild said. "Me—just now



I'd like to know why, if he didn't do it, Wynant don't come in and answer questions for us."

"One reason might be that Mrs. Jorgensen'd like to slam him in the squirrel cage again." I thought of something. "Herbert Macaulay's working for Wynant: you didn't just take Macaulay's word for it that the man in Allentown wasn't him?"

"No. He was a younger man than Wynant, with damned little gray in his hair and no dye, and he didn't look like the pictures we got." He seemed positive. "You got anything to do the next hour or so?"

"No."

"That's fine." He stood up. "I'll get some of the boys working on these things we been discussing and then maybe me and you will pay some visits."

"Swell," I said, and he went out of the office.

There was a copy of the *Times* in his wastebasket. I fished it out and turned to the Public Notices columns. Macaulay's advertisement was there: "*Abner. Yes. Bunny.*"

When Guild returned I asked: "How about Wynant's help, whoever he had working in the shop? Have they been looked up?"

"Uh-huh, but they don't know anything. They was laid off at the end of the week that he went away--there's two of them--and haven't seen him since."

"What were they working on when the shop was closed?"

"Some kind of paint or something--something about a permanent green. I don't know. I'll find out if you want."

"I don't suppose it matters. Is it much of a shop?"

"Looks like a pretty good lay-out, far as I can tell. You think the shop might have something to do with it?"

"Anything might."

"Uh-huh. Well, let's run along."

16

"First thing," Guild said as we left his office, "we'll go see Mr. Nunheim. He ought to be home: I told him to stick around till I phoned him."

Mr. Nunheim's home was on the fourth floor of a dark, damp,

and smelly building made noisy by the Sixth Avenue elevated. Guild knocked on the door.

There were sounds of hurried movement inside, then a voice asked: "Who is it?" The voice was a man's, nasal, somewhat irritable.

Guild said: "John."

The door was hastily opened by a small sallow man of thirty-five or -six whose visible clothes were an undershirt, blue pants, and black silk stockings. "I wasn't expecting you, Lieutenant," he whined. "You said you'd phone." He seemed frightened. His dark eyes were small and set close together; his mouth was wide, thin, and loose; and his nose was peculiarly limber, a long, drooping nose, apparently boneless.

Guild touched my elbow with his hand and we went in. Through an open door to the left an unmade bed could be seen. The room we entered was a living-room, shabby and dirty, with clothing, newspapers, and dirty dishes sitting around. In an alcove to the right there was a sink and a stove. A woman stood between them holding a sizzling skillet in her hand. She was a big-boned, full-fleshed, red-haired woman of perhaps twenty-eight, handsome in a rather brutal, sloppy way. She wore a rumpled pink kimono and frayed pink mules with lopsided bows on them. She stared sullenly at us.

Guild did not introduce me to Nunheim and he paid no attention to the woman. "Sit down," he said, and pushed some clothing out of the way to make a place for himself on an end of the sofa.

I removed part of a newspaper from a rocking-chair and sat down. Since Guild kept his hat on I did the same with mine.

Nunheim went over to the table, where there was about two inches of whisky in a pint bottle and a couple of tumblers, and said: "Have a shot?"

Guild made a face. "Not that vomit. What's the idea of telling me you just knew the Wolf girl by sight?"

"That's all I did, Lieutenant, that's the Christ's truth." Twice his eyes slid sideways towards me and he jerked them back. "Maybe I said hello to her or how are you or something like

that when I saw her, but that's all I knew her. That's the Christ's truth."

The woman in the alcove laughed, once, derisively, and there was no merriment in her face.

Nunheim twisted himself around to face her. "All right," he told her, his voice shrill with rage, "put your mouth in and I'll pop a tooth out of it."

She swung her arm and let the skillet go at his head. It missed, crashing into the wall. Grease and egg-yolks made fresher stains on wall, floor, and furniture.

He started for her. I did not have to rise to put out a foot and trip him. He tumbled down on the floor. The woman had picked up a paring knife.

"Cut it out," Guild growled. He had not stood up either. "We come here to talk to you, not to watch this rough-house comedy. Get up and behave yourself."

Nunheim got slowly to his feet. "She drives me nuts when she's drinking," he said. "She been ragging me all day." He moved his right hand back and forth. "I think I sprained my wrist."

The woman walked past us without looking at any of us, went into the bedroom, and shut the door.

Guild said: "Maybe if you'd quit sucking around after other women you wouldn't have so much trouble with this one."

"What do you mean, Lieutenant?" Nunheim was surprised and innocent and perhaps pained.

"Julia Wolf."

The little fallow man was indignant now. "That's a lie, Lieutenant. Anybody that say I ever--"

Guild interrupted him by addressing me: "If you want to take a poke at him, I wouldn't stop on account of his bum wrist: he couldn't ever hit hard anyhow."

Nunheim turned to me with both hands out. "I didn't mean you were a liar. I meant maybe somebody made a mistake if they--"

Guild interrupted him again: "You wouldn't've taken her if you could've gotten her?"

Nunheim moistened his lower lip and looked warily at the bedroom door. "Well," he said slowly in a cautiously low voice, "of course she was a classy number. I guess I wouldn't've turned it down."

"But you never tried to make her?"

Nunheim hesitated, then moved his shoulders and said: "You know how it is. A fellow knocking around tries most everything he runs into."

Guild looked sourly at him. "You'd done better to tell me that in the beginning. Where were you the afternoon she was knocked off?"

The little man jumped as if he had been stuck with a pin. "For Christ's sake, Lieutenant, you don't think I had anything to do with that. What would I want to hurt her for?"

"Where were you?"

Nunheim's loose lips twitched nervously. "What day was she—" He broke off as the bedroom door opened.

The big woman came out carrying a suitcase. She had put on street clothes.

"Miriam," Nunheim said.

She stared at him dully and said: "I don't like crooks, and even if I did, I wouldn't like crooks that are stool-pigeons, and if I liked crooks that are stool-pigeons, I still wouldn't like you." She turned to the outer door.

Guild, catching Nunheim's arm to keep him from following the woman, repeated: "Where were you?"

Nunheim called: "Miriam. Don't go. I'll behave, I'll do anything. Don't go, Miriam."

She went out and shut the door.

"Let me go," he begged Guild. "Let me bring her back. I can't get along without her. I'll bring her right back and tell you anything you want to know. Let me go. I've got to have her."

Guild said: "Nuts. Sit down." He pushed the little man down in a chair. "We didn't come here to watch you and that broad dance around a maypole. Where were you the afternoon the girl was killed?"

Nunheim put his hands over his face and began to cry.

"Keep on stalling," Guild said, "and I'm going to slap you silly."

I poured some whisky in a tumbler and gave it to Nunheim.

"Thank you, sir, thank you." He drank it, coughed, and brought out a dirty handkerchief to wipe his face with. "I can't remember offhand, Lieutenant," he whined. "Maybe I was over at Charlie's shooting pool, maybe I was here. Miriam would remember if you'll let me go bring her back."

Guild said: "The hell with Miriam. How'd you like to be thrown in the can on account of not remembering?"

"Just give me a minute. I'll remember. I'm not stalling, Lieutenant. You know I always come clean with you. I'm just upset now. Look at my wrist." He held up his right wrist to let us see it was swelling. "Just one minute." He put his hands over his face again.

Guild winked at me and we waited for the little man's memory to work.

Suddenly he took his hands down from his face and laughed. "Holy hell! It would serve me right if you had pinched me. That's the afternoon I was— Wait, I'll show you." He went into the bedroom.

After a few minutes Guild called: "Hey, we haven't got all night. Shake it up."

There was no answer.

The bedroom was empty when we went into it and when we opened the bathroom door the bathroom was empty. There was an open window and a fire-escape.

I said nothing, tried to look nothing.

Guild pushed his hat back a little from his forehead and said: "I wish he hadn't done that." He went to the telephone in the living-room.

While he was telephoning, I poked around in drawers and closets, but found nothing. My search was not very thorough and I gave it up as soon as he had finished putting the police machinery in action.

"I guess we'll find him, all right," he said. "I got some news.

We've identified Jorgensen as Kelterman."

"Who made the identification?"

"I sent a man over to talk to the girl that gave him his alibi, this Olga Fenton, and he finally got it out of her. He says he couldn't shake her on the alibi, though. I'm going over and have a try at her. Want to come along?"

I looked at my watch and said: "I'd like to, but it's too late. Picked him up yet?"

"The order's out." He looked thoughtfully at me. "And will that baby have to do some talking!"

I grinned at him. "Now who do you think killed her?"

"I'm not worrying," he said. "Just let me have things to squeeze enough people with and I'll turn up the right one before the whistle blows."

In the street he promised to let me know what happened, and we shook hands and separated. He ran after me a couple of seconds later to send his very best regards to Nora.

## 17

Home, I delivered Guild's message to Nora and told her the day's news.

"I've got a message for you, too," she said. "Gilbert Wynant dropped in and was quite disappointed at missing you. He asked me to tell you he has something of the 'utmost importance' to tell you."

"He's probably discovered that Jorgensen has a mother fixation."

"Do you think Jorgensen killed her?" she asked.

"I thought I knew who did it," I said, "but it's too mixed up right now for anything but guesses."

"And what's your guess?"

"Mimi, Jorgensen, Wynant, Nunheim, Gilbert, Dorothy, Aunt Alice, Morelli, you, me, or Guild. Maybe Studsy did it. How about shaking up a drink?"

She mixed some cocktails. I was on my second or third when

she came back from answering the telephone and said: "Your friend Mimi wants to talk to you."

I went to the telephone. "Hello, Mimi."

"I'm awfully sorry I was so rude the other night, Nick, but I was so upset and I just <sup>upset</sup> simply lost my temper and made a show of myself. Please forgive me." She ran through this very rapidly, as if anxious to get it over with.

"That's all right," I said.

She hardly let me get my three words out before she was speaking again, but slower and more earnestly now: "Can I see you, Nick? Something horrible has happened, something-I don't know what to do, which way to turn."

"What is it?"

"I can't tell you over the phone, but you've got to tell me what to do. I've got to have somebody's advice. Can't you come over?"

"You mean now?"

"Yes. Please."

I said, "All right," and went back to the living-room. "I'm going to run over and see Mimi. She says she's in a jam and needs help."

Nora laughed. "Keep your legs crossed. She apologize to you? She did to me."

"Yes, all in one breath. Is Dorothy home or still at Aunt Alice's?"

"Still at Auntie's, according to Gilbert. How long will you be?"

"No longer than I have to. The chances are they've copped Jorgensen and she wants to know if it can be fixed."

"Can they do anything to him? I mean if he didn't kill the Wolf girl."

"I suppose the old charges against him—threats by mail, attempted extortion—could be raked up." I stopped drinking to ask Nora and myself a question: "I wonder if he and Nunheim know each other." I thought that over, but could make nothing more than a possibility of it. "Well, I'm on my way."

Mimi received me with both hands. "It's awfully, awfully nice of you to forgive me, Nick, but then you've always been awfully nice. I don't know what got into me Monday night."

I said: "Forget it."

Her face was somewhat pinker than usual and the firmness of its muscles made it seem younger. Her blue eyes were very bright. Her hands had been cold on mine. She was tense with excitement, but I could not figure out what kind of excitement it was.

She said: "It was awfully sweet of your wife, too, to—"

"Forget it."

"Nick, what can they do to you for concealing evidence that somebody's guilty of a murder?"

"Make you an accomplice—accomplice after the fact is the technical term—if they want."

"Even if you voluntarily change your mind and give them the evidence?"

"They can. Usually they don't."

She looked around the room as if to make sure there was nobody else there and said: "Clyde killed Julia. I found the proof and hid it. What'll they do to me?"

"Probably nothing except give you hell—if you turn it in. He was once your husband: you and he are close enough together than no jury'd be likely to blame you for trying to cover him up—unless, of course, they had reason to think you had some other motive."

She asked coolly, deliberately: "Do you?"

"I don't know," I said. "My guess would be that you had intended to use this proof of his guilt to shake him down for some dough as soon as you could get in touch with him, and that now something else has come up to make you change your mind."

She made a claw of her right hand and struck at my face with her pointed nails. Her teeth were together, her lips drawn far back over them.



I caught her wrist. "Women are getting tough," I said, trying to sound wistful. "I just left one that heaved a skillet at a guy."

She laughed, though her eyes did not change. "You're such a bastard. You always think the worst of me, don't you?"

I took my hand away from her wrist and she rubbed the marks my fingers had left on it.

"Who was the woman who threw the skillet?" she asked. "Anyone I know?"

"It wasn't Nora, if that's what you mean. Have they arrested Sidney-Christian Kelterman-Jorgensen yet?"

"What?"

I believed in her bewilderment, though both it and my belief in it surprised me. "Jorgensen is Kelterman," I said. "You remember him. I thought you knew."

"You mean that horrible man who-?"

"Yes."

"I won't believe it." She stood up working her fingers together. "I won't. I won't." Her face was sick with fear, her voice strained, unreal as a ventriloquist's. "I won't believe it."

"That'll help a lot," I said.

She was not listening to me. She turned her back to me and went to a window, where she stood with her back to me.

I said: "There's a couple of men in a car out front who look like they might be coppers waiting to pick him up when he--"

She turned around and asked sharply: "Are you sure he's Kelterman?" Most of the fear had already gone out of her face and her voice was at least human again.

"The police are."

We stared at each other, both of us busy thinking. I was thinking she had not been afraid that Jorgensen killed Julia Wolf, or even that he might be arrested: she was afraid his only reason for marrying her had been as a move in some plot against Wynant.

When I laughed—not because the idea was funny, but because it had come to me so suddenly—she started and smiled uncertainly. "I won't believe it," she said, and her voice was very soft now, "until he tells me himself."

"And when he does—then what?"

She moved her shoulders a little, and her lower lip quivered. "He is my husband."

That should have been funny, but it annoyed me. I said: "Mimi, this is Nick. You remember me, N-i-c-k."

"I know you never think any good of me," she said gravely. "You think I'm—"

"All right. All right. Let it pass. Let's get back to the dope on Wynant you found."

"Yes, that," she said, and turned away from me. When she turned back her lip was quivering again. "That was a lie, Nick. I didn't find anything." She came close to me. "Clyde had no right to send those letters to Alice and Macaulay trying to make everybody suspicious of me and I thought it would serve him right if I made up something against him, because I really did think—I mean, I do think—he killed her and it was only—"

"What'd you make up?" I asked.

"I—I hadn't made it up yet. I wanted to find out about what they could do—you know, the things I asked you—first. I might've pretended she came to a little when I was alone with her, while the others were phoning, and told me he did it."

"You didn't say you heard something and kept quiet, you said you found something and hid it."

"But I hadn't really made up my mind what I—"

"When'd you hear about Wynant's letter to Macaulay?"

"This afternoon," she said, "there was a man here from the police."

"Didn't he ask you anything about Kelterman?"

"He asked me if I knew him or had ever known him, and I thought I was telling the truth when I said no."

"Maybe you did," I said, "and for the first time I now believe you were telling the truth when you said you found some sort of evidence against Wynant."

She opened her eyes wider. "I don't understand."

"Neither do I, but it could be like this: you could've found something and decided to hold it out, probably with the idea of selling it to Wynant; then when his letters started people

looking you over, you decided to give up the money idea and both pay him back and protect yourself by turning it over to the police; and, finally, when you learn that Jorgensen is Kelterman, you make another about-face and hold it out, not for money this time, but to leave Jorgensen in as bad a spot as possible as punishment for having married you as a trick in his game against Wynant and not for love."

She smiled calmly and asked: "You really think me capable of anything, don't you?"

"That doesn't matter," I said. "What ought to matter to you is that you'll probably wind up your life in prison somewhere."

Her scream was not loud, but it was horrible, and the fear that had been in her face before was as nothing to that there now. She caught my lapels and clung to them, babbling: "Don't say that, please don't. Say you don't think it." She was trembling so I put an arm around her to keep her from falling.

We did not hear Gilbert until he coughed and asked: "Aren't you well, Mamma?"

She slowly took her hands down from my lapels and moved back a step and said: "Your mother's a silly woman." She was still trembling, but she smiled at me and she made her voice playful: "You're a brute to frighten me like that."

I said I was sorry.

Gilbert put his coat and hat on a chair and looked from one to the other of us with polite interest. When it became obvious that neither of us was going to tell him anything he coughed again, said, "I'm awfully glad to see you," and came over to shake hands with me.

I said I was glad to see him.

Mimi said: "Your eyes look tired. I bet you've been reading all afternoon without your glasses again." She shook her head and told me: "He's as unreasonable as his father."

"Is there any news of Father?" he asked.

"Not since that false alarm about his suicide," I said. "I suppose you heard it was a false alarm."

"Yes." He hesitated. "I'd like to see you for a few minutes before you go."

"Sure."

"But you're seeing him now, darling," Mimi said. "Are there secrets between you that I'm not supposed to know about?" Her tone was light enough. She had stopped trembling.

"It would bore you." He picked up his hat and coat, nodded at me, and left the room.

Mimi shook her head again and said: "I don't understand that child at all. I wonder what he made of our tableau." She did not seem especially worried. Then, more seriously: "What made you say that, Nick?"

"About you winding up in-?"

"No, never mind." She shuddered. "I don't want to hear it. Can't you stay for dinner? I'll probably be all alone."

"I'm sorry I can't. Now how about this evidence you found?"

"I didn't really find anything. That was a lie." She frowned earnestly. "Don't look at me like that. It really was a lie."

"So you sent for me just to lie to me?" I asked. "Then why'd you change your mind?"

She chuckled. "You must really like me, Nick, or you wouldn't always be so disagreeable."

I could not follow that line of reasoning. I said: "Well, I'll see what Gilbert wants and run along."

"I wish you could stay."

"I'm sorry I can't," I said again. "Where'll I find him?"

"The second door to the- Will they really arrest Chris?"

"That depends," I told her. "on what kind of answers he gives them. He'll have to talk pretty straight to stay out."

"Oh, he'll-" she broke off, looked sharply at me, asked, "You're not playing a trick on me? He's really that Kelterman?"

"The police are sure enough of it."

"But the man who was here this afternoon didn't ask a single question about Chris," she objected. "He only asked me if I knew-"

"They weren't sure then," I explained. "It was just a half-idea."

"But they're sure now?"

I nodded.

"How'd they find out?"

"From a girl he knows," I said.

"Who?" Her eyes darkened a little, but her voice was under control.

"I can't remember her name." Then I went back to the truth: "The one that gave him his alibi for the afternoon of the murder."

"Alibi?" she asked indignantly. "Do you mean to tell me the police would take the word of a girl like that?"

"Like what?"

"You know what I mean."

"I don't. Do you know the girl?"

"No," she said as if I had insulted her. She narrowed her eyes and lowered her voice until it was not much more than a whisper: "Nick, do you suppose he killed Julia?"

"What would he do that for?"

"Suppose he married me to get revenge on Clyde," she said, "and— You know he did urge me to come over here and try to get some money from Clyde. Maybe I suggested it—I don't know—but he did urge me. And then suppose he happened to run into Julia. She knew him, of course, because they worked for Clyde at the same time. And he knew I was going over to see her that afternoon and was afraid if I made her mad she might expose him to me and so— Couldn't that be?"

"That doesn't make any sense at all. Besides, you and he left here together that afternoon. He wouldn't've had time to—"

"But my taxicab was awfully slow," she said, "and then I may have stopped somewhere on— I think I did. I think I stopped at a drug store to get some aspirin." She nodded energetically. "I remember I did."

"And he knew you were going to stop, because you had told him," I suggested. "You can't go on like this, Mimi. Murder's serious. It's nothing to frame people for just because they played tricks on you."

"Tricks?" she asked, glaring at me. "Why, that..." She called Jorgensen all the usual profane, obscene, and otherwise in-

sulting names, her voice gradually rising until towards the end she was screaming into my face.

When she stopped for breath I said: "That's pretty cursing, but it--"

"He even had the nerve to hint that I might've killed her," she told me. "He didn't have nerve enough to ask me, but he kept leading up to it until I told him positively that--well, that I didn't do it."

"That's not what you started to say. You told him positively what?"

She stamped her foot. "Stop heckling me."

"All right and to hell with you," I said. "Coming here wasn't my idea." I started towards my hat and coat.

She ran after me, caught my arm. "Please, Nick, I'm sorry. It's this rotten temper of mine. I don't know what I--"

Gilbert came in and said: "I'll go along part of the way with you."

Mimi scowled at him. "You were listening."

"How could I help it, the way you screamed?" he asked. "Can I have some money?"

"And we haven't finished talking," she said.

I looked at my watch. "I've got to run, Mimi. It's late."

"Will you come back after you get through with your date?"

"If it's not too late. Don't wait for me."

"I'll be here," she said. "It doesn't matter how late it is."

I said I would try to make it. She gave Gilbert his money. He and I went downstairs.

19

"I was listening," Gilbert told me as we left the building. "I think it's silly not to listen whenever you get a chance if you're interested in studying people, because they're never exactly the same as when you're with them. People don't like it when they know about it, of course, but"--he smiled--"I don't suppose birds and animals like having naturalists spying on them either."

"Hear much of it?" I asked.

"Oh, enough to know I didn't miss any of the important part."

"And what'd you think of it?"

He pursed his lips, wrinkled his forehead, said judicially: "It's hard to say exactly. Mamma's good at hiding things sometimes, but she's never much good at making them up. It's a funny thing—I suppose you've noticed it—the people who lie the most are nearly always the clumsiest at it, and they're easier to fool with lies than most people, too. You'd think they'd be on the look-out for lies, but they seem to be the very ones that will believe almost anything at all. I suppose you've noticed that, haven't you?"

"Yes."

He said: "What I wanted to tell you: Chris didn't come home last night. That's why Mamma's more upset than usual, and when I got the mail this morning there was a letter for him that I thought might have something in it, so I steamed it open." He took a letter from his pocket and held it out to me. "You'd better read it and then I'll seal it again and put it with tomorrow's mail in case he comes back, though I don't think he will."

"Why don't you?" I asked as I took the letter.

"Well, he's really Kelterman. . . ."

"You say anything to him about it?"

"I didn't have a chance. I haven't seen him since you told me."

I looked at the letter in my hand. The envelope was postmarked Boston, Massachusetts, December 27, 1932, and addressed in a slightly childish feminine hand to Mr. Christian Jorgensen, Courtland Apts., New York, N. Y. "How'd you happen to open it?" I asked, taking the letter out of the envelope.

"I don't believe in intuition," he said, "but there are probably odors, sounds, maybe something about the handwriting, that you can't analyze, maybe aren't even conscious of, that influence you sometimes. I don't know what it was: I just felt there might be something important in it."

"You often feel that way about the family's mail?"

He glanced quickly at me as if to see whether I was spoofing, then said: "Not often, but I have opened their mail before. I told you I was interested in studying people."

I read the letter:

*Dear Sid—*

*Olga wrote me about you being back in the U.S. married to another woman and using the name of Christian Jorgensen. That is not right Sid as you very well know the same as leaving me without word of any kind all these years. And no money. I know that you had to go away on account of that trouble you had with Mr. Wynant but am sure he has long since forgot all about that and I do think you might have written to me as you know very well I have always been your friend and am willing to do anything within my power for you at any time. I do not want to scold you Sid but I have to see you. I will be off from the store Sunday and Monday on account of New Years and will come down to N. Y. Saturday night and must have a talk with you. Write me where you will meet me and what time as I do not want to make any trouble for you. Be sure and write me right away so I will get it in time.*

*Your true wife,  
Georgia*

There was a street address.

I said, "Well, well, well," and put the letter back in its envelope. "And you resisted the temptation to tell your mother about this?"

"Oh, I knew what her reaction would be. You saw how she carried on with just what you told her. What do you think I ought to do about it?"

"You ought to let me tell the police."

He nodded immediately. "If you think that's the best thing. You can show it to them if you want."

I said, "Thanks," and put the letter in my pocket.

He said: "Now there's another thing: I had some morphine I was experimenting with and somebody stole it, about twenty grains."

"Experimenting how?"

"Taking it. I wanted to study the effects."



"And how'd you like them?" I asked.

"Oh, I didn't expect to like it. I just wanted to know about it. I don't like things that dull my mind. That's why I don't very often drink, or even smoke. I want to try cocaine, though, because that's supposed to sharpen the brain, isn't it?"

"It's supposed to. Who do you think copped the stuff?"

"I suspect Dorothy, because I have a theory about her. That's why I'm going over to Aunt Alice's for dinner: Dorry's still there and I want to find out. I can make her tell me anything."

"Well, if she's been over there," I asked, "how could she—"

"She was home for a little while last night," he said, "and, besides, I don't know exactly when it was taken. Today was the first time I opened the box it was in for three or four days."

"Did she know you had it?"

"Yes. That's one of the reasons I suspect her. I don't think anybody else did. I experimented on her too."

"How'd she like it?"

"Oh, she liked it all right, but she'd have taken it anyhow. But what I want to ask you is could she have become an addict in a little time like that?"

"Like what?"

"A week—no—ten days."

"Hardly, unless she thought herself into it. Did you give her much?"

"No."

"Let me know if you find out," I said. "I'm going to grab a taxi here. Be seeing you."

"You're coming over later tonight, aren't you?"

"If I can make it. Maybe I'll see you then."

"Yes," he said, "and thanks awfully."

At the first drug store I stopped to telephone Guild, not expecting to catch him in his office, but hoping to learn how to reach him at his home. He was still there, though.

"Working late," I said.

His "That's what" sounded very cheerful.

I read Georgia's letter to him, gave him her address.

"Good pickings," he said.

I told him Jorgensen had not been home since the day before.

"Think we'll find him in Boston?" he asked.

"Either there," I guessed, "or as far south as he could manage to get by this time."

"We'll try 'em both," he said, still cheerful. "Now I got a bit of news for you. Our friend Nunheim was filled full of .32s just about an hour after he copped the sneak on us—dead-er'n hell. The pills look like they come from the same gun that cut down the Wolf dame. The experts are matching 'em up now. I guess he wishes he'd stayed and talked to us."

20

Nora was eating a piece of cold duck with one hand and working on a jig-saw puzzle with the other when I got home.

"I thought you'd gone to live with her," she said. "You used to be a detective: find me a brownish piece shaped something like a snail with a long neck."

"Piece of duck or puzzle? Don't let's go to the Edges' tonight: they're dull folk."

"All right, but they'll be sore."

"We wouldn't be that lucky," I complained. "They'd get sore at the Quinns and—"

"Harrison called you up. He told me to tell you now's the time to buy some McIntyre Porcupine—I think that's right—to go with your Dome stock. He said it closed at twenty and a quarter." She put a finger on her puzzle. "The piece I want goes in there."

I found the piece she wanted and told her, almost word for word, what had been done and said at Mimi's.

"I don't believe it," she said. "You made it up. There aren't any people like that. What's the matter with them? Are they the first of a new race, of monsters?"

"I just tell you what happens; I don't explain it."

"How would you explain it? There doesn't seem to be a

single one in the family—now that Mimi's turned against her Chris—who has even the slightest reasonably friendly feeling for any of the others, and yet there's something very alike in all of them."

"Maybe that explains it," I suggested.

"I'd like to see Aunt Alice," she said. "Are you going to turn that letter over to the police?"

"I've already phoned Guild," I replied, and told her about Nunheim.

"What does that mean?" she asked.

"For one thing, if Jorgensen's out of town, as I think he is, and the bullets are from the same gun that was used on Julia Wolf, and they probably are, then the police'll have to find his accomplice if they want to hang anything on him."

"I'm sure if you were a good detective you'd be able to make it much clearer to me than it is." She went to work on her puzzle again. "Are you going back to see Mimi?"

"I doubt it. How about letting that dido rest while we get some dinner?"

The telephone rang and I said I would get it. It was Dorothy Wynant. "Hello. Nick?"

"The same. How are you, Dorothy?"

"Gil just got here and asked me about that you-know, and I wanted to tell you I did take it, but I only took it to try to keep him from becoming a dope-fiend."

"What'd you do with it?" I asked.

"He made me give it back to him and he doesn't believe me, but, honestly, that's the only reason I took it."

"I believe you."

"Will you tell Gil, then? If you believe me, he will, because he thinks you know all about things like that."

"I'll tell him as soon as I see him," I promised.

There was a pause, then she asked: "How's Nora?"

"Looks all right to me. Want to talk to her?"

"Well, yes, but there's something I want to ask you. Did—did Mamma say anything about me when you were over there today?"

"Not that I remember. Why?"

"And did Gil?"

"Only about the morphine."

"Are you sure?"

"Pretty sure," I said. "Why?"

"It's nothing, really—if you're sure. It's just silly."

"Right. I'll call Nora." I went into the living-room. "Dorothy wants to talk to you. Don't ask her to eat with us."

When Nora returned from the telephone she had a look in her eye.

"Now what's up?" I asked.

"Nothing. Just 'How are you' and all that."

I said: "If you're lying to the old man, God'll punish you."

We went over to a Japanese place on Fifty-eighth Street for dinner and then I let Nora talk me into going to the Edges' after all.

Halsey Edge was a tall scrawny man of fifty-something with a pinched yellow face and no hair at all. He called himself "a ghoul by profession and inclination"—his only joke, if that is what it was—by which he meant he was an archæologist, and he was very proud of his collection of battle-axes. He was not so bad once you had resigned yourself to the fact that you were in for occasional cataloguings of his armory—stone axes, copper axes, bronze axes, double-bladed axes, faceted axes, polygonal axes, scalloped axes, hammer axes, adze axes, Mesopotamian axes, Hungarian axes, Nordic axes, and all of them looking pretty moth-eaten. It was his wife we objected to. Her name was Leda, but he called her Tip. She was very small and her hair, eyes, and skin, though naturally of different shades, were all muddy. She seldom sat—she perched on things—and liked to cock her head a little to one side. Nora had a theory that once when Edge opened an antique grave, Tip ran out of it, and Margot Innes always spoke of her as the gnome, pronouncing all the letters. She once told me that she did not think any literature of twenty years ago would live, because it had no psychiatry in it. They lived in a pleasant old three-story house on the edge of Greenwich Village and their liquor was excellent.

A dozen or more people were there when we arrived. Tip introduced us to the ones we did not know and then backed me into a corner. "Why didn't you tell me that those people I met at your place Christmas were mixed up in a murder mystery?" she asked, tilting her head to the left until her ear was practically resting on her shoulder.

"I don't know that they are. Besides, what's one murder mystery nowadays?"

She tilted her head to the right. "You didn't even tell me you had taken the case."

"I had done what? Oh, I see what you mean. Well, I hadn't and haven't. My getting shot ought to prove I was an innocent bystander."

"Does it hurt much?"

"It itches. I forgot to have the dressing changed this afternoon."

"Wasn't Nora utterly terrified?"

"So was I and so was the guy that shot me. There's Halsey. I haven't spoken to him yet."

As I slid around her to escape she said: "Harrison promised to bring the daughter tonight."

I talked to Edge for a few minutes—chiefly about a place in Pennsylvania he was buying—then found myself a drink and listened to Larry Crowley and Phil Thames swap dirty stories until some woman came over and asked Phil—he taught at Columbia—one of the questions about technocracy that people were asking that week. Larry and I moved away.

We went over to where Nora was sitting. "Watch yourself," she told me. "The gnome's hell-bent on getting the inside story of Julia Wolf's murder out of you."

"Let her get it out of Dorothy," I said. "She's coming with Quinn."

"I know."

Larry said: "He's nuts over that girl, isn't he? He told me he was going to divorce Alice and marry her."

Nora said, "Poor Alice," sympathetically. She did not like Alice.

Larry said: "That's according to how you look at it." He liked Alice. "I saw that fellow who's married to the girl's mother yesterday. You know, the tall fellow I met at your house."

"Jorgensen?"

"That's it. He was coming out of a pawnshop on Sixth Avenue near Forty-sixth."

"Talk to him?"

"I was in a taxi. It's probably polite to pretend you don't see people coming out of pawnshops, anyhow."

Tip said, "Sh-h-h," in all directions, and Levi Oscant began to play the piano. Quinn and Dorothy arrived while he was playing. Quinn was drunk as a lord and Dorothy seemed to have something better than a glow.

She came over to me and whispered: "I want to leave when you and Nora do."

I said: "You won't be here for breakfast."

Tip said, "Sh-h-h," in my direction.

We listened to some more music. Dorothy fidgeted beside me for a minute and whispered again: "Gil says you're going over to see Mamma later. Are you?"

"I doubt it."

Quinn came unsteadily around to us. "How're you, boy? How're you, Nora? Give him my message?" (Tip said, "Sh-h-h," at him. He paid no attention to her. Other people looked relieved and began to talk. "Listen, boy, you bank at the Golden Gate Trust in San Francisco, don't you?"

"Got a little money there."

"Get it out, boy. I heard tonight they're plenty shaky."

"All right. I haven't got much there, though."

"No? What do you do with all your money?"

"Me and the French hoard gold."

He shook his head solemnly. "It's fellows like you that put the country on the bum."

"And it's fellows like me that don't go on the bum with it," I said. "Where'd you get the skinful?"

"It's Alice. She's been sulking for a week. If I didn't drink

I'd go crazy."

"What's she sulking about?"

"About my drinking. She thinks—" He leaned forward and lowered his voice confidentially. "Listen. You're all my friends and I'm going to tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to get a divorce and marry—"

He had tried to put an arm around Dorothy. She pushed it away and said: "You're silly and you're tiresome. I wish you'd leave me alone."

"She thinks I'm silly and tiresome," he told me. "You know why she don't want to marry me? I bet you don't. It's because she's in—"

"Shut up! Shut up, you drunken fool!" Dorothy began to beat his face with both hands. Her face was red, her voice shrill. "If you say that again I'll kill you!"

I pulled Dorothy away from Quinn; Larry caught him, kept him from falling. He whimpered: "She hit me, Nick." Tears ran down his cheeks. Dorothy had her face against my coat and seemed to be crying.

We had what audience there was. Tip came running, her face bright with curiosity. "What is it, Nick?"

I said: "Just a couple of playful drunks. They're all right. I'll see that they get home all right."

Tip was not for that: she wanted them to stay at least until she had a chance to discover what had happened. She urged Dorothy to lie down awhile, offered to get something—whatever she meant by that—for Quinn, who was having trouble standing up now.

Nora and I took them out. Larry offered to go along, but we decided that was not necessary. Quinn slept in a corner of the taxicab during the ride to his apartment, and Dorothy sat stiff and silent in the other corner, with Nora between them. I clung to a folding seat and thought that anyway we had not stayed long at the Edges'.

Nora and Dorothy remained in the taxicab while I took Quinn upstairs. He was pretty limp.

Alice opened the door when I rang. She had on green

pyjamas and held a hairbrush in one hand. She looked wearily at Quinn and spoke wearily: "Bring it in."

I took it in and spread it on a bed. It mumbled something I could not make out and moved one hand feebly back and forth, but its eyes stayed shut.

"I'll tuck him in," I said and loosened his tie.

Alice leaned on the foot of the bed. "If you want to. I've given up doing it."

I took off his coat, vest, and shirts.

"Where'd he pass out this time?" she asked with not much interest. She was still standing at the foot of the bed, brushing her hair now.

"The Edges'." I unbuttoned his pants.

"With that little Wynant bitch?" The question was casual.

"There were a lot of people there."

"Yes," she said. "He wouldn't pick a secluded spot." She brushed her hair a couple of times. "So you don't think it's clubby to tell me anything."

Her husband stirred a little and mumbled: "Dorry."

I took off his shoes.

Alice sighed. "I can remember when he had muscles." She stared at her husband until I took off the last of his clothes and rolled him under the covers. Then she sighed again and said: "I'll get you a drink."

"You'll have to make it short: Nora's waiting in the cab."

She opened her mouth as if to speak, shut it, opened it again to say: "Righto."

I went into the kitchen with her.

Presently she said: "It's none of my business, Nick, but what do people think of me?"

"You're like everybody else: some people like you, some people don't, and some have no feeling about it one way or the other."

She frowned. "That's not exactly what I meant. What do people think about my staying with Harrison with him chasing everything that's hot and hollow?"

"I don't know, Alice."



"What do you think?"

"I think you probably know what you're doing and whatever you do is your own business."

She looked at me with dissatisfaction. "You'll never talk yourself into any trouble, will you?" She smiled bitterly. "You know I'm only staying with him for his money, don't you? It may not be a lot to you, but it is to me—the way I was raised."

"There's always divorce and alimony. You ought to have—"

"Drink your drink and get to hell out of here," she said wearily.

21

Nora made a place for me between her and Dorothy in the taxicab. "I want some coffee," she said. "Reuben's?"

I said, "All right," and gave the driver the address.

Dorothy asked timidly: "Did his wife say anything?"

"She sent her love to you."

Nora said: "Stop being nasty."

Dorothy said: "I don't really like him, Nick. I won't ever see him again—honestly." She seemed pretty sober now. "It was—well, I was lonesome and he was somebody to run around with."

I started to say something, but stopped when Nora poked me in the side.

Nora said: "Don't worry about it. Harrison's always been a simpleton."

"I don't want to stir things up," I said, "but I think he's really in love with the girl."

Nora poked me in the side again.

Dorothy peered at my face in the dim light. "You're—you're not— You're not making fun of me, Nick?"

"I ought to be."

"I heard a new story about the gnome tonight," Nora said in the manner of one who did not mean to be interrupted, and explained to Dorothy, "That's Mrs. Edge. Levi says . . ." The story was funny enough if you knew Tip. Nora went on talking about her until we got out of the taxicab at Reuben's.

Herbert Macaulay was in the restaurant, sitting at a table

with a plump dark-haired girl in red. I waved at him and, after we had ordered some food, went over to speak to him.

"Nick Charles, Louise Jacobs," he said. "Sit down. What's news?"

"Jorgensen's Kelterman," I told him.

"The hell he is!"

I nodded. "And he seems to have a wife in Boston."

"I'd like to see him," he said slowly. "I knew Kelterman. I'd like to make sure."

"The police seem sure enough. I don't know whether they've found him yet. Think he killed Julia?"

Macaulay shook his head with emphasis. "I can't see Kelterman killing anybody—not as I knew him—in spite of those threats he made. You remember I didn't take them very seriously at the time. What else has happened?" When I hesitated, he said: "Louise is all right. You can talk."

"It's not that. I've got to go back to my folks and food. I came over to ask if you'd got an answer to your ad in this morning's *Times*."

"Not yet. Sit down, Nick, there's a lot I want to ask you. You told the police about Wynant's letter, didn't—"

"Come up to lunch tomorrow and we'll bat it around. I've got to get back to my folks."

"Who is the little blond girl?" Louise Jacobs asked. "I've seen her places with Harrison Quinn."

"Dorothy Wynant."

"You know Quinn?" Macaulay asked me.

"Ten minutes ago I was putting him to bed."

Macaulay grinned. "I hope you keep his acquaintance like that—social."

"Meaning what?"

Macaulay's grin became rueful. "He used to be my broker, and his advice led me right up to the poor-house steps."

"That's sweet," I said. "He's my broker now and I'm following his advice."

Macaulay and the girl laughed. I pretended I was laughing and returned to my table.

Dorothy said: "It's not midnight yet and Mamma said she'd be expecting you. Why don't we all go to see her?"

Nora was very carefully pouring coffee into her cup.

"What for?" I asked. "What are you two up to now?"

It would have been hard to find two more innocent faces than theirs.

"Nothing, Nick," Dorothy said. "We thought it would be nice. It's early and—"

"And we all love Mimi."

"No-o, but—"

"It's too early to go home," Nora said.

"There are speakeasies," I suggested, "and nightclubs and Harlem."

Nora made a face. "All your ideas are alike."

"Want to go over to Barry's and try our luck at faro?"

Dorothy started to say yes, but stopped when Nora made another face.

"That's the way I feel about seeing Mimi again," I said. "I've had enough of her for one day."

Nora sighed to show she was being patient. "Well, if we're going to wind up in a speakeasy as usual, I'd rather go to your friend Studsy's, if you won't let him give us any more of that awful champagne. He's cute."

"I'll do my best," I promised and asked Dorothy, "Did Gilbert tell you he caught Mimi and me in a compromising position?"

She tried to exchange glances with Nora, but Nora's glance was occupied with a cheese blintz on her plate. "He—he didn't exactly say that."

"Did he tell you about the letter?"

"From Chris's wife? Yes." Her blue eyes glittered. "Won't Mamma be furious!"

"You like it, though."

"Suppose I do? What of it? What did she ever do to make me—"

Nora said: "Nick, stop bullying the child."

I stopped.

Business was good at the Pigiron Club. The place was full of people, noise, and smoke. Studsy came from behind the cash register to greet us. "I was hoping you'd come in." He shook my hand and Nora's and grinned broadly at Dorothy.

"Anything special?" I asked.

He made a bow. "Everything's special with ladies like these."

I introduced him to Dorothy. He bowed to her and said something elaborate about any friend of Nick's and stopped a waiter. "Pete, put a table up here for Mr. Charles."

"Pack them in like this every night?" I asked.

"I got no kick," he said. "They come once, they come back again. Maybe I ain't got no black marble cuspidors, but you don't have to spit out what you buy here. Want to lean against the bar whilst they're putting up that table?"

We said we did and ordered drinks.

"Hear about Nunheim?" I asked.

He looked at me for a moment before making up his mind to say: "Uh-huh, I heard. His girl's down there"—he moved his head to indicate the other end of the room—"celebrating, I guess."

I looked past Studsy down the room and presently picked out big red-haired Miriam sitting at a table with half a dozen men and women. "Hear who did it?" I asked.

"She says the police done it—he knew too much."

"That's a laugh," I said.

"That's a laugh," he agreed. "There's your table. Set right down. I'll be back in a minute."

We carried our glasses over to a table that had been squeezed in between two tables which had occupied a space large enough for one and made ourselves as nearly comfortable as we could.

Nora tasted her drink and shuddered. "Do you suppose this could be the 'bitter vetch' they used to put in cross-word puzzles?"

Dorothy said: "Oh, look."

We looked and saw Shep Morelli coming towards us. His face had attracted Dorothy's attention. Where it was not dented it was swollen and its coloring ranged from deep purple around one eye to the pale pink of a piece of court-plaster on his chin.

He came to our table and leaned over a little to put both fists on it. "Listen," he said, "Studsy says I ought to apologize."

Nora murmured, "Old Emily Post Studsy," while I asked, "Well?"

Morelli shook his battered head. "I don't apologize for what I do—people've got to take it or leave it—but I don't mind telling you I'm sorry I lost my noodle and cracked down on you and I hope it ain't bothering you much and if there's anything I can do to square it I—"

"Forget it. Sit down and have a drink. This is Mr. Morelli, Miss Wynant."

Dorothy's eyes became wide and interested.

Morelli found a chair and sat down. "I hope you won't hold it against me, neither," he told Nora.

She said: "It was fun."

He looked at her suspiciously.

"Out on bail?" I asked.

"Uh-huh, this afternoon." He felt his face gingerly with one hand. "That's where the new ones come from. They had me resisting some more arrest just for good measure before they turned me loose."

Nora said indignantly: "That's horrible. You mean they really—"

I patted her hand.

Morelli said: "You got to expect it." His swollen lower lip moved in what was meant for a scornful smile. "It's all right as long as it takes two or three of 'em to do it."

Nora turned to me. "Did you do things like that?"

"Who? Me?"

Studsy came over to us carrying a chair. "They lifted his

face, huh?" he said, nodding at Morelli. We made room for him and he sat down. He grinned complacently at Nora's drink and at Nora. "I guess you don't get no better than that in your fancy Park Avenue joints—and you pay four bits a slug for it here."

Nora's smile was weak, but it was a smile. She put her foot on mine under the table.

I asked Morelli: "Did you know Julia Wolf in Cleveland?"

He looked sidewise at Studsy, who was leaning back in his chair, gazing around the room, watching his profits mount.

"When she was Rhoda Stewart," I added.

He looked at Dorothy.

I said: "You don't have to be cagey. She's Clyde Wynant's daughter."

Studsy stopped gazing around the room and beamed on Dorothy. "So you are? And how is your pappy?"

"But I haven't seen him since I was a little girl," she said.

Morelli wet the end of a cigarette and put it between his swollen lips. "I come from Cleveland." He struck a match. His eyes were dull—he was trying to keep them dull. "She wasn't Rhoda Stewart except once—Nancy Kane." He looked at Dorothy again. "Your father knows it."

"Do you know my father?"

"We had some words once."

"What about?" I asked.

"Her." The match in his hand had burned down to his fingers. He dropped it, struck another, and lit his cigarette. He raised his eyebrows at me, wrinkling his forehead. "Is this O.K.?"

"Surc. There's nobody here you can't talk in front of."

"O.K. He was jealous as hell. I wanted to take a poke at him, but she wouldn't let me. That was all right: he was her bank-roll."

"How long ago was this?"

"Six months, eight months."

"Have you seen him since she got knocked off?"

He shook his head. "I never seen him but a couple of times,

and this time I'm telling you about is the last."

"Was she gypping him?"

"She don't say she is. I figure she is."

"Why?"

"She's a wise head—plenty smart. She was getting dough some-  
wheres. Once I wanted five grand." He snapped his fingers.  
"Cash."

I decided against asking if he had paid her back. "Maybe  
he gave it to her."

"Sure-maybe."

"Did you tell any of this to the police?" I asked.

He laughed once, contemptuously. "They thought they could  
smack it out of me. Ask 'em what they think now. You're a  
right guy, I don't—" He broke off, took the cigarette from be-  
tween his lips. "The earysipelas kid," he said and put out a  
hand to touch the ear of a man who, sitting at one of the tables  
we had been squeezed in between, had been leaning further  
and further back towards us.

The man jumped and turned a startled pale pinched face  
around over his shoulder at Morelli.

Morelli said: "Pull in that lug—it's getting in our drinks."

The man stammered, "I d-didn't mean nothing, Shep," and  
rammed his belly into his table trying to get as far as possible  
from us, which still did not take him out of ear-shot.

Morelli said, "You won't ever mean nothing, but that don't  
keep you from trying," and returned his attention to me. "I'm  
willing to go all the way with you—the kid's dead, it's not  
going to hurt her any—but Mulrooney ain't got a wrecking crew  
that can get it out of me."

"Swell," I said. "Tell me about her, where you first ran into  
her, what she did before she tied up with Wynant, where he  
found her."

"I ought to have a drink." He twisted himself around in his  
chair and called: "Hey, garsong—you with the boy on your  
back!"

The somewhat hunchbacked waiter Studsy had called Pete  
pushed through people to our table and grinned affectionately

down at Morelli. "What'll it be?" He sucked a tooth noisily.

We gave our orders and the waiter went away.

Morelli said: "Me and Nancy lived in the same block. Old man Kane had a candy store on the corner. She used to pinch cigarettes for me." He laughed. "Her old man kicked hell out of me once for showing her how to get nickels out of the telephone with a piece of wire. You know, the old style ones. Jesus, we couldn't've been more than in the third grade." He laughed again, low in his throat. "I wanted to glaum some fixtures from a row of houses they were building around the corner and plant 'em in his cellar and tell Schultz, the cop on the beat, to pay him back, but she wouldn't let me."

Nora said: "You must've been a little darling."

"I was that," he said fondly. "Listen. Once when I was no more'n five or—"

A feminine voice said: "I thought that was you."

I looked up and saw it was red-haired Miriam speaking to me. I said: "Hello."

She put her hands on her hips and stared somberly at me. "So he knew too much for you."

"Maybe, but he took it on the lam down the fire-escape with his shoes in his hand before he told us any of it."

"Balls!"

"All right. What do you think he knew that was too much for us?"

"Where Wynant is," she said.

"So? Where is he?"

"I don't know. Art knew."

"I wish he'd told us. We—"

"Balls!" she said again. "You know and the police know. Who do you think you're kidding?"

"I'm not kidding. I don't know where Wynant is."

"You're working for him and the police are working with you. Don't kid me. Art thought knowing was going to get him a lot of money, poor sap. He didn't know what it was going to get him."

"Did he tell you he knew?" I asked.



"I'm not as dumb as you think. He told me he knew something that was going to get him big dough and I've seen how it worked out. I guess I can put two and two together."

"Sometimes the answer's four," I said, "and sometimes it's twenty-two. I'm not working for Wynant. Now don't say, 'Balls,' again. Do you want to help—"

"No. He was a rat and he held out on the people he was ratting for. He asked for what he got, only don't expect me to forget that I left him with you and Guild, and the next time anybody saw him he was dead."

"I don't want you to forget anything. I'd like you to remember whether—"

"I've got to go to the can," she said and walked away. Her carriage was remarkably graceful.

"I don't know as I'd want to be mixed up with that dame," Studsy said thoughtfully. "She's mean medicine."

Morelli winked at me.

Dorothy touched my arm. "I don't understand, Nick."

I told her that was all right and addressed Morelli: "You were telling us about Julia Wolf."

"Uh-huh. Well, old man Kane booted her out when she was fifteen or sixteen and got in some kind of a jam with a high-school teacher and she took up with a guy called Face Peppler, a smart kid if he didn't talk too much. I remember once me and Face were—" He broke off and cleared his throat. "Anyways, Face and her stuck together—what the hell—it must be five, six years, throwing out the time he was in the army and she was living with some guy that I can't remember his name—a cousin of Dick O'Brien's, a skinny dark-headed guy that liked his liquor. But she went back to Face when he come out of the army, and they stuck together till they got nailed trying to shake down some bird from Toronto. Face took it and got her off with six months—they give him the business. Last I heard he was still in. I saw her when she came out—she touched me for a couple hundred to blow town. I hear from her once, when she sends it back to me and tells me Julia Wolf's her name now and she likes the big city fine, but I know Face is hearing from

her right along. So when I move herein '28, I look her up. She's—"

Mariam came back and stood with her hands on her hips as before. "I've been thinking over what you said. You must think I'm pretty dumb."

"No," I said, not very truthfully.

"It's a cinch I'm not dumb enough to fall for that song and dance you tried to give me. I can see things when they're right in front of me."

"All right."

"It's not all right. You killed Art and—"

"Not so loud, girlie." Studsy rose and took her arm. His voice was soothing. "Come along. I want to talk to you." He led her towards the bar.

Morelli winked again. "He likes that. Well, I was saying I looked her up when I moved here, and she told me she had this job with Wynant and he was nuts about her and she was sitting pretty. It seems they learned her shorthand in Ohio when she was doing her six months and she figures maybe it'll be an in to something—you know, maybe she can get a job somewheres where they'll go out and leave the safe open. An agency had sent her over to do a couple days' work for Wynant and she figured maybe he'd be worth more for a long pull than for a quick tap and a getaway, so she give him the business and wound up with a steady connection. She was smart enough to tell him she had a record and was trying to go straight now and all that, so's not to have the racket spoiled if he found out anyhow, because she said his lawyer was a little leery of her and might have her looked up. I don't know just what she was doing, you understand, because it's her game and she don't need my help, and even if we are pals in a way, there's no sense in telling me anything I might want to go to her boss with. Understand, she wasn't my girl or anything—we was just a couple old friends, been kids playing together. Well, I used to see her ever once in a while—we used to come here a lot—till he kicked up too much of a fuss and then she said she was going to cut it out, she wasn't going to lose a soft bed over a few

drinks with me. So that was that. That was October, I guess, and she stuck to it. I haven't seen her since."

"Who else did she run around with?" I asked.

Morelli shook his head. "I don't know. She don't do much talking about people."

"She was wearing a diamond engagement ring. Know anything about it?"

"Nothing except she didn't get it from me. She wasn't wearing it when I see her."

"Do you think she meant to throw in with Peppler again when he got out?"

"Maybe. She didn't seem to worry much about him being in, but she liked to work with him all right and I guess they'd've teamed up again."

"And how about the cousin of Dick O'Brien, the skinny dark-headed lush? What became of him?"

Morelli looked at me in surprise. "Search me."

Studsy returned alone. "Maybe I'm wrong," he said as he sat down, "but I think somebody could do something with that cluck if they took hold of her right."

Morelli said: "By the throat."

Studsy grinned good-naturedly. "No. She's trying to get somewhere. She works hard at her singing lessons and—"

Morelli looked at his empty glass and said: "This tiger milk of yours must be doing her pipes a lot of good." He turned his head to yell at Pete: "Hey, you with the knapsack, some more of the same. We got to sing in the choir tomorrow."

Pete said: "Coming up, Sheppy." His lined gray face lost its dull apathy when Morelli spoke to him.

An immensely fat blond man—so blond he was nearly albino—who had been sitting at Miriam's table came over and said to me in a thin, tremulous, effeminate voice: "So you're the party who put it to little Art Nunhei—"

Morelli hit the fat man in his fat belly, as hard as he could without getting up. Studsy, suddenly on his feet, leaned over Morelli and smashed a big fist into the fat man's face. I noticed, foolishly, that he still led with his right. Hunchbacked

Pete came up behind the fat man and banged his empty tray down with full force on the fat man's head. The fat man fell back, upsetting three people and a table. Both bar-tenders were with us by then. One of them hit the fat man with a blackjack as he tried to get up, knocking him forward on hands and knees, the other put a hand down inside the fat man's collar in back, twisting the collar to choke him. With Morelli's help they got the fat man to his feet and hustled him out.

Pete looked after them and sucked a tooth. "That God-damned Sparrow," he explained to me, "you can't take no chances on him when he's drinking."

Studsy was at the next table, the one that had been upset, helping people pick up themselves and their possessions. "That's bad," he was saying, "bad for business, but where you going to draw the line? I ain't running a dive, but I ain't trying to run a young ladies' seminary neither."

Dorothy was pale, frightened; Nora wide-eyed and amazed. "It's a madhouse," she said. "What'd they do that for?"

"You know as much about it as I do," I told her.

Morelli and the bar-tenders came in again, looking pretty pleased with themselves. Morelli and Studsy returned to their seats at our table.

"You boys are impulsive," I said.

Studsy repeated, "Impulsive," and laughed, "Ha-ha-ha."

Morelli was serious. "Any time that guy starts anything, you got to start it first. It's too late when he gets going. We seen him like that before, ain't we, Studsy?"

"Like what?" I asked. "He hadn't done anything."

"He hadn't, all right," Morelli said slowly, "but it's a kind of feeling you get about him sometimes. Ain't that right, Studsy?"

Studsy said: "Uh-huh, he's hysterical."

## 23

It was about two o'clock when we said good-night to Studsy and Morelli and left the Pigiron Club.

Dorothy slumped down in her corner of the taxicab and

said: "I'm going to be sick. I know I am." She sounded as if she was telling the truth.

Nora said: "That booze." She put her head on my shoulder. "Your wife is drunk, Nicky. Listen, you've got to tell me what happened—everything. Not now, tomorrow. I don't understand a thing that was said or a thing that was done. They're marvelous."

Dorothy said: "Listen, I can't go to Aunt Alice's like this. She'd have a fit."

Nora said: "They oughtn't've hit that fat man like that, though it must've been funny in a cruel way."

Dorothy said: "I suppose I'd better go to Mamma's."

Nora said: "Erysipelas hasn't got anything to do with ears. What's a lug, Nicky?"

"An ear."

Dorothy said: "Aunt Alice would have to see me because I forgot the key and I'd have to wake her up."

Nora said: "I love you, Nicky, because you smell nice and know such fascinating people."

Dorothy said: "It's not much out of your way to drop me at Mamma's, is it?"

I said, "No," and gave the driver Mimi's address.

Nora said: "Come home with us."

Dorothy said: "No-o, I'd better not."

Nora asked, "Why not?" and Dorothy said, "Well, I don't think I ought to," and that kind of thing went on until the taxicab stopped at the Courtland.

I got out and helped Dorothy out. She leaned heavily on my arm. "Please come up, just for a minute."

Nora said, "Just for a minute," and got out of the taxicab.

I told the driver to wait. We went upstairs. Dorothy rang the bell. Gilbert, in pyjamas and bathrobe, opened the door. He raised one hand in a warning gesture and said in a low voice: "The police are here."

Mimi's voice came from the living-room: "Who is it, Gil?"

"Mr. and Mrs. Charles and Dorothy."

Mimi came to meet us as we went in. "I never was so glad

to see anybody. I just didn't know which way to turn." She had on a pinkish satin robe over a pinkish silk nightgown, and her face was pink and by no means unhappy. She ignored Dorothy, squeezed one of Nora's hands, one of mine. "Now I'm going to stop worrying and leave it all up to you, Nick. You'll have to tell the foolish little woman what to do."

Dorothy, behind me, said, "Balls!" under her breath, but with a lot of feeling.

Mimi did not show that she had heard her daughter. Still holding our hands, she drew us back towards the living-room, chattering: "You know Lieutenant Guild. He's been very nice, but I'm sure I must have tried his patience. I've been so-well-I mean I've been so bewildered. But now you're here and--"

We went into the living-room.

Guild said, "Hello," to me and, "Good evening, ma'am," to Nora. The man with him, the one he had called Andy and who had helped him search our rooms the morning of Morelli's visit, nodded and grunted at us.

"What's up?" I asked.

Guild looked at Mimi out the corners of his eyes, then at me, and said: "The Boston police found Jorgensen or Kelterman or whatever you want to call him at his first wife's place and asked him some questions for us. The chief answer seems to be he don't have anything to do with Julia Wolf getting killed or not getting killed and Mrs. Jorgensen can prove it because she's been holding out what amounts to the goods on Wynant." His eyes slid sidewise in their sockets to focus on Mimi again. "The lady kind of don't want to say yes and kind of don't want to say no. To tell you the truth, Mr. Charles, I don't know what to make of her in a lot of ways."

I could understand that. I said, "She's probably frightened," and Mimi tried to look frightened. "Has he been divorced from the first wife?"

"Not according to the first wife."

Mimi said: "She's lying, I bet."

I said: "Sh-h-h. Is he coming back to New York?"

"It looks like he's going to make us extradite him if we want

him. Boston says he's squawking his head off for a lawyer."

"Do you want him that bad?"

Guild moved his big shoulders, "If bringing him back'll help us on this murder. I don't care much about any of the old charges or the bigamy. I never believe in hounding a man over things that are none of my business."

I asked Mimi: "Well?"

"Can I talk to you alone?"

I looked at Guild, who said: "Anything that'll help."

Dorothy touched my arm. "Nick, listen to me first. I—" She broke off. Everybody was staring at her.

"What?" I asked.

"I—I want to talk to you first."

"Go ahead."

"I mean alone," she said.

I patted her hand. "Afterwards."

Mimi led me into her bedroom and carefully shut the door. I sat on the bed and lit a cigarette. Mimi leaned back against the door and smiled at me very gently and trustingly. Half a minute passed that way.

Then she said, "You do like me, Nick," and when I said nothing she asked, "Don't you?"

"No."

She laughed and came away from the door. "You mean you don't approve of me." She sat on the bed beside me. "But you do like me well enough to help me?"

"That depends."

"Depends on wha—"

The door opened and Dorothy came in. "Nick, I've got to—"

Mimi jumped up and confronted her daughter. "Get out of here," she said through her teeth.

Dorothy flinched, but she said: "I won't. You're not going to make a—"

Mimi slashed Dorothy across the mouth with the back of her right hand. "Get out of here."

Dorothy screamed and put a hand to her mouth. Holding it

there, holding her wide frightened eyes on Mimi's face, she backed out of the room.

Mimi shut the door again. I said: "You must come over to our place some time and bring your little white whips."

She did not seem to hear me. Her eyes were heavy, brooding, and her lips were thrust out a little in a half-smile, and when she spoke, her voice seemed heavier, throatier, than usual. "My daughter's in love with you."

"Nonsense."

"She is and she's jealous of me. She has absolute spasms whenever I get within ten feet of you." She spoke as if thinking of something else.

"Nonsense. Maybe she's got a little hangover from that crush she had on me when she was twelve, but that's all it is."

Mimi shook her head. "You're wrong, but never mind." She sat down on the bed beside me again. "You've got to help me out of this. I—"

"Sure," I said. "You're a delicate *fleur* that needs a great big man's protection."

"Oh, that?" She waved a hand at the door through which Dorothy had gone. "You're surely not getting— Why, it's nothing you haven't heard about before—and seen and done, for that matter. It's nothing to worry you." She smiled as before, with heavy, brooding eyes, and lips thrust out a little. "If you want Dorry, take her, but don't get sentimental about it. But never mind that. Of course I'm not a delicate *fleur*. You never thought I was."

"No," I agreed.

"Well, then," she said with an air of finality.

"Well then what?"

"Stop being so damned coquettish," she said. "You know what I mean. You understand me as well as I understand you."

"Just about, but you've been doing the coquetting ever since—"

"I know. That was a game. I'm not playing now. That son of a bitch made a fool of me, Nick, an out and out fool, and now he's in trouble and expects me to help him. I'll help him."



She put a hand on my knee and her pointed nails dug into my flesh. "The police, they don't believe me. How can I make them believe that he's lying, that I know nothing more than I've told them about the murder?"

"You probably can't," I said slowly, "especially since Jorgensen's only repeating what you told me a few hours ago."

She caught her breath, and her nails dug into me again. "Did you tell them that?"

"Not yet." I took her hand off my knee.

She sighed with relief. "And of course you won't tell them now, will you?"

"Why not?"

"Because it's a lie. He lied and I lied. I didn't find anything, anything at all."

I said: "We're back where we were earlier, and I believe you just as much now as I did then. What happened to those new terms we were on? You understanding me, me understanding you, no coquetting, no games, no playing."

She slapped my hand lightly. "All right. I did find something—not much, but something—and I'm not going to give it up to help that son of a bitch. You can understand how I feel about it, Nick. You'd feel the same—"

"Maybe," I said, "but the way it stands, I've got no reason for putting in with you. Your Chris is no enemy of mine. I've got nothing to gain by helping you frame him."

She sighed. "I've been thinking about that a lot. I don't suppose what money I could give you would mean much to you now"—she smiled crookedly—"nor my beautiful white body. But aren't you interested in saving Clyde?"

"Not necessarily."

She laughed at that. "I don't know what that means."

"It might mean I don't think he needs saving. The police haven't got much on him. He's screwy, he was in town the day Julia was killed, and she had been gypping him. That's not enough to arrest him on."

She laughed again. "But with my contribution?"

"I don't know. What is it?" I asked, and went on without

waiting for the answer I did not expect. "Whatever it is, you're being a sap, Mimi. You've got Chris cold on bigamy. Sock that to him. There's no--"

She smiled sweetly and said: "But I am holding that in reserve to use after this if he--"

"If he gets past the murder charge, huh? Well, it won't work out that way, lady. You can get him about three days in jail. By that time the District Attorney will have questioned him and checked up on him enough to know that he didn't kill Julia and that you've been making a chump of the D.A., and when you spring your little bigamy charge the D.A. will tell you to go jump in the lake, and he'll refuse to prosecute."

"But he can't do that, Nick."

"Can and will," I assured her, "and if he can dig up proof that you're holding out something he'll make it as tough for you as he can."

She chewed her lower lip, asked: "You're being honest with me?"

"I'm telling you exactly what'll happen, unless district attorneys have changed a lot since my day."

She chewed her lip some more. "I don't want him to get off," she said presently, "and I don't want to get into any trouble myself." She looked up at me. "If you're lying to me Nick..."

"There's nothing you can do about it except believe me or disbelieve me."

She smiled and put a hand on my cheek and kissed me on the mouth and stood up. "You're such a bastard. Well, I'm going to believe you." She walked down to the other end of the room and back again. Her eyes were shiny, her face pleasantly excited.

"I'll call Guild," I said.

"No, wait. I'd rather—I'd rather see what you think of it first."

"All right, but no clowning."

"You're certainly afraid of your shadow," she said, "but don't worry, I'm not going to play any tricks on you."

I said that would be swell and how about showing me whatever she had to show me. "The others will be getting restless."

She went around the bed to a closet, opened the door, pushed some clothes aside, and put a hand among other clothes behind them. "That's funny," she said.

"Funny?" I stood up. "It's a panic. It'll have Guild rolling on the floor." I started towards the door.

"Don't be so bad-tempered," she said. "I've got it." She turned to me holding a wadded handkerchief in her hand. As I approached, she opened the handkerchief to show me a three-inch length of match-chain, broken at one end, attached at the other to a small gold knife. The handkerchief was a woman's and there were brown stains on it.

"Well?" I asked.

"It was in her hand and I saw it when they left me with her and I knew it was Clyde's, so I took it."

"You're sure it's his?"

"Yes," she said impatiently. "See, they're gold, silver, and copper links. He had it made out of the first batches of metal that came through that smelting process he invented. Anybody who knows him at all well can identify it—there can't be another like it." She turned the knife over to let me see the C M W engraved in it. "They're his initials. I never saw the knife before, but I'd know the chain anywhere. Clyde's worn it for years."

"Did you remember it well enough that you could've described it without seeing it again?"

"Of course."

"Is that your handkerchief?"

"Yes."

"And the stain on it's blood?"

"Yes. The chain was in her hand—I told you—and there was some blood on them." She frowned at me. "Don't you— You act as if you don't believe me."

"Not exactly," I said, "but I think you ought to be sure you're telling your story straight this time."

She stamped her foot. "You're—" She laughed and anger

went out of her face. "You can be the most annoying man. I'm telling the truth now, Nick. I've told you everything that happened exactly as it happened."

"I hope so. It's about time. You're sure Julia didn't come to enough to say anything while you were alone with her?"

"You're trying to make me mad again. Of course I'm sure."

"All right," I said. "Wait here. I'll get Guild, but if you tell him the chain was in Julia's hand and she wasn't dead yet he's going to wonder whether you didn't have to rough her up a little to get it away from her."

She opened her eyes wide. "What should I tell him?"

I went out and shut the door.

24

Nora, looking a little sleepy, was entertaining Guild and Andy in the living-room. The Wynant offspring were not in sight.

"Go ahead," I told Guild. "First door to the left. I think she's readied up for you."

"Crack her?" he asked.

I nodded.

"What'd you get?"

"See what you get and we'll put them together and see how they add up," I suggested.

"O.K. Come on, Andy." They went out.

"Where's Dorothy?" I asked.

Nora yawned. "I thought she was with you and her mother. Gilbert's around somewhere. He was here till a few minutes ago. Do we have to hang around long?"

"Not long." I went back down the passageway past Mimi's door to another bedroom door, which was open, and looked in. Nobody was there. A door facing it was shut. I knocked on it.

Dorothy's voice: "What is it?"

"Nick," I said and went in.

She was lying on her side on a bed, dressed except for her slippers. Gilbert was sitting on the bed beside her. Her mouth seemed a little puffy, but it may have been from crying: her eyes were red. She raised her head to stare sullenly at me.

"Still want to talk to me?" I asked.

Gilbert got up from the bed. "Where's Mamma?"

"Talking to the police."

He said something I did not catch and left the room.

Dorothy shuddered. "He gives me the creeps," she said, and then remembered to stare sullenly at me again.

"Still want to talk to me?"

"What made you turn against me like that?"

"You're being silly." I sat down where Gilbert had been sitting. "Do you know anything about this knife and chain your mother's supposed to have found?"

"No. Where?"

"What'd you want to tell me?"

"Nothing-now," she said disagreeably, "except you might at least wipe her lipstick off your mouth."

I wiped it off. She snatched the handkerchief from my hand and rolled over to pick up a package of matches from the table on that side of the bed. She struck a match.

"That's going to stink like hell," I said.

She said, "I don't care," but she blew out the match. I took the handkerchief, went to a window, opened it, dropped the handkerchief out, shut the window, and went back to my seat on bed. "If that makes you feel any better."

"What did Mamma say-about me?"

"She said you're in love with me."

She sat up abruptly. "What did you say?"

"I said you just liked me from when you were a kid."

Her lower lip twitched. "Do-do you think that's what it is?"

"What else could it be?"

"I don't know." She began to cry. "Everybody's made so much fun of me about it-Mamma and Gilbert and Harrison-I-"

I put my arms around her. "To hell with them."

After a while she asked: "Is Mamma in love with you?"

"Good God, no! She hates men more than any woman I've ever known who wasn't a Lesbian."

"But she's always having some sort of--"

"That's the body. Don't let it fool you. Mimi hates men—all of us—bitterly."

She had stopped crying. She wrinkled her forehead and said: "I don't understand. Do you hate her?"

"Not as a rule."

"Now?"

"I don't think so. She's being stupid and she's sure she's being very clever, and that's a nuisance, but I don't think I hate her."

"I do," Dorothy said.

"So you told me last week. Something I meant to ask you: did you know or did you ever see the Arthur Nunheim we were talking about in the speakeasy tonight?"

She looked sharply at me. "You're just trying to change the subject."

"I want to know. Did you?"

"No."

"He was mentioned in the newspapers," I reminded her. "He was the one who told the police about Morelli knowing Julia Wolf."

"I didn't remember his name," she said. "I don't remember ever having heard it until tonight."

I described him. "Ever see him?"

"No."

"He may have been known as Albert Norman sometimes. Does that sound familiar?"

"No."

"Know any of the people we saw at Studsy's tonight? Or anything about them?"

"No. Honestly, Nick, I'd tell you if I knew anything at all that might help you."

"No matter who it hurt?"

"Yes," she said immediately, then, "What do you mean?"

"You know damned well what I mean."

She put her hands over her face, and her words were barely audible: "I'm afraid, Nick. I—" She jerked her hands down as someone knocked on the door.

"All right," I called.

Andy opened the door far enough to stick his head in. He tried to keep curiosity from showing in his face while saying: "The Lieutenant wants to see you."

"Be right out," I promised.

He opened the door wider. "He's waiting." He gave me what was probably meant to be a significant wink, but a corner of his mouth moved more than his eye did and the result was a fairly startling face.

"I'll be back," I told Dorothy, and followed him out.

He shut the door behind me and put his mouth close to my ear. "The kid was at the keyhole," he muttered.

"Gilbert?"

"Yep. He had time to get away from it when he heard me coming, but he was there, right enough."

"That's mild for him," I said. "How'd you all make out with Mrs. J.?"

He puckered his thick lips up in an *o* and blew breath out noisily. "What a dame!"

## 25

We went into Mimi's bedroom. She was sitting in a deep chair by a window looking very pleased with herself. She smiled gayly at me and said: "My soul is spotless now. I've confessed everything."

Guild stood by a table wiping his face with a handkerchief. There were still some drops of sweat on his temples, and his face seemed old and tired. The knife and chain, and the handkerchief they had been wrapped in, were on the table.

"Finished?" I asked.

"I don't know, and that's a fact," he said. He turned his head to address Mimi: "Would you say we were finished?"

Mimi laughed. "I can't imagine what more there would be."

"Well," Guild said slowly, somewhat reluctantly, "in that case I guess I'd like to talk to Mr. Charles, if you'll excuse us for a couple of minutes." He folded his handkerchief carefully and put it in his pocket.

"You can talk here." She got up from the chair. "I'll go out and talk to Mrs. Charles till you're through." She tapped my cheek playfully with the tip of a forefinger as she passed me. "Don't let them say too horrid things about me, Nick."

Andy opened the door for her, shut it behind her, and made the *o* and the blowing noise again.

I lay down on the bed. "Well," I asked, "what's what?"

Guild cleared his throat. "She told us about finding this here chain and knife on the floor where the Wolf dame had most likely broke it off fighting with Wynant, and she told us the reasons why she'd hid it till now. Between me and you, that don't make any too much sense, looking at it reasonably, but maybe that ain't the way to look at it in this case. To tell you the plain truth, I don't know what to make of her in a lot of ways, I don't for a fact."

"The chief thing," I advised them, "is not to let her tire you out. When you catch her in a lie, she admits it and gives you another lie to take its place and, when you catch her in that one, admits it and gives you still another, and so on. Most people—even women—get discouraged after you've caught them in the third or fourth straight lie and fall back on either the truth or silence, but not Mimi. She keeps trying and you've got to be careful or you'll find yourself believing her, not because she seems to be telling the truth, but simply because you're tired of disbelieving her."

Guild said: "Hm-m-m. Maybe." He put a finger inside his collar. He seemed very uncomfortable. "Look here, do you think she killed that dame?"

I discovered that Andy was staring at me so intently that his eyes bulged. I sat up and put my feet on the floor. "I wish I knew. That chain business looks like a plant, all right, but. . . We can find out whether he had a chain like that, maybe whether he still has it. If she remembered the chain as well as she said she did, there's no reason why she couldn't have told a jeweler how to make one, and anybody can buy a knife and have any initials they want engraved on it. There's plenty to be said against the probability of her having gone that far. If she



did plant it, it's more likely she had the original chain—maybe she's had it for years—but all that's something for you folks to check up."

"We're doing the best we can," Guild said patiently. "So you do think she did it?"

"The murder?" I shook my head. "I haven't got that far yet. How about Nunheim? Did the bullets match up?"

"They did—from the same gun as was used on the dame—all five of them."

"He was shot five times?"

"He was, and close enough to burn his clothes."

"I saw his girl, the big red-head, tonight in a speak," I told him. "She's saying you and I killed him because he knew too much."

He said: "Hm-m-m. What speak was that? I might want to talk to her."

"Studsy Burke's Pigiron Club," I said, and gave him the address. "Morelli hangs out there too. He tells me Julia Wolf's real name is Nancy Kane and she has a boy friend doing time in Ohio—Face Pepler."

From the tone of Guild's "Yes?" I imagined he had already found out about Pepler and about Julia's past. "And what else did you pick up in your travels?"

"A friend of mine—Larry Crowley, a press agent—saw Jorgensen coming out of a hock-shop on Sixth near Forty-sixth yesterday afternoon."

"Yes?"

"You don't seem to get excited about my news. I'm—"

Mimi opened the door and came in with glasses, whisky, and mineral water on a tray. "I thought you'd like a drink," she said cheerfully.

We thanked her.

She put the tray on the table, said, "I don't mean to interrupt," smiled at us with that air of amused tolerance which women like to affect towards male gatherings, and went out.

"You were saying something," Guild reminded me.

"Just that if you people think I'm not coming clean with you, you ought to say so. We've been playing along together so far and I wouldn't want—"

"No, no," Guild said hastily, "it's nothing like that, Mr. Charles." His face had reddened a little. "I been— The fact is the Commissioner's been riding us for action and I guess I been kind of passing it on. This second murder's made things tough." He turned to the tray on the table. "How'll you have yours?"

"Straight, thanks. No leads on it?"

"Well, the same gun and a lot of bullets, same as with her, but that's about all. It was a rooming-house hallway in between a couple stores. Nobody there claims they know Nunheim or Wynant or anybody else we can connect. The door's left unlocked, anybody could walk in, but that don't make too much sense when you come to think of it."

"Nobody saw or heard anything?"

"Sure, they heard the shooting, but they didn't see anybody doing it." He gave me a glass of whisky.

"Find any empty shells?" I asked.

He shook his head. "Neither time. Probably a revolver."

"And he emptied it both times—counting the shot that hit her telephone—if, like a lot of people, he carried an empty chamber under the hammer."

Guild lowered the glass he was raising towards his mouth. "You're not trying to find a Chinese angle on it, are you?" he complained, "just because they shoot like that."

"No, but any kind of angle would help some. Find out where Nunheim was the afternoon the girl was killed?"

"Uh-huh. Hanging around the girl's building—part of the time anyhow. He was seen in front and he was seen in back, if you're going to believe people that didn't think much of it at the time and haven't got any reason for lying about it. And the day before the killing he had been up to her apartment, according to an elevator boy. The boy says he came down right away and he don't know whether he got in or not."

I said: "So. Maybe Miriam's right, maybe he did know too much. Find out anything about the four thousand difference be-

tween what Macaulay gave her and what Clyde Wynant says he got from her?"

"No."

"Morelli says she always had plenty of money. He says she once lent him five thousand in cash."

Guild raised his eyebrows. "Yes?"

"Yes. He also says Wynant knew about her record."

"Seems to me," Guild said slowly, "Morelli did a lot of talking to you."

"He likes to talk. Find out anything more about what Wynant was working on when he left, or what he was going away to work on?"

"No. You're kind of interested in that shop of his."

"Why not? He's an inventor, the shop's his place. I'd like to have a look at it some time."

"Help yourself. Tell me some more about Morelli, and how you go about getting him to open up."

"He likes to talk. Do you know a fellow called Sparrow? A big fat pale fellow with a pansy voice?"

Guild frowned. "No. Why?"

"He was there—with Miriam—and wanted to take a crack at me, but they wouldn't let him."

"And what'd he want to do that for?"

"I don't know. Maybe because she told him I helped knock Nunheim off—helped you."

Guild said: "Oh." He scratched his chin with a thumb-nail, looked at his watch. "It's getting kind of late. Suppose you drop in and see me some time tomorrow—today."

I said, "Sure," instead of the things I was thinking, nodded at him and Andy, and went out to the living-room.

Nora was sleeping on the sofa. Mimi put down the book she was reading and asked: "Is the secret session over?"

"Yes." I moved towards the sofa.

Mimi said: "Let her sleep awhile, Nick. You're going to stay till after your police friends have gone, aren't you?"

"All right. I want to see Dorothy again."

"But she's asleep."

"That's all right. I'll wake her up."

"But—"

Guild and Andy came in, said their good nights, Guild looked regretfully at the sleeping Nora, and they left.

Mimi sighed. "I'm tired of policemen," she said. "You remember that story?"

"Yes."

Gilbert came in. "Do they really think Chris did it?"

"No," I said.

"Who do they think?"

"I could've told you yesterday. I can't today."

"That's ridiculous," Mimi protested. "They know very well and you know very well that Clyde did it." When I said nothing she repeated more sharply: "You know very well that Clyde did it."

"He didn't," I said.

An expression of triumph brightened Mimi's face. "You *are* working for him, now aren't you?"

My "No" bounced off her with no effect whatever.

Gilbert asked, not argumentatively, but as if he wanted to know: "Why couldn't he?"

"He could've, but he didn't. Would he have written those letters throwing suspicion on Mimi, the one person who's helping him by hiding the chief evidence against him?"

"But maybe he didn't know that. Maybe he thought the police were simply not telling all they knew. They often do that, don't they? Or maybe he thought he could discredit her, so they wouldn't believe her if—"

"That's it," Mimi said. "That's exactly what he did, Nick."

I said to Gilbert: "You don't think he killed her."

"No, I don't think he did, but I'd like to know why you don't think so—you know—your method."

"And I'd like to know yours."

His face flushed a little and there was some embarrassment in his smile. "Oh, but I—it's different."

"He *knows* who killed her," Dorothy said from the doorway. She was still dressed. She stared at me fixedly, as if afraid to

look at anybody else. Her face was pale and she held her small body stiffly erect.

Nora opened her eyes, pushed herself up on an elbow, and asked, "What?" sleepily. Nobody answered her.

Mimi said: "Now, Dorry, don't let's have one of those idiotic dramatic performances."

Dorothy said: "You can beat me after they've gone. You will." She said it without taking her eyes off mine.

Mimi tried to look as if she did not know what her daughter was talking about.

"Who does he know killed her?" I asked.

Gilbert said: "You're making an ass of yourself, Dorry, you're--"

I interrupted him: "Let her. Let her say what she's got to say. Who killed her, Dorothy?"

She looked at her brother and lowered her eyes and no longer held herself erect. Looking at the floor, she said indistinctly: "I don't know. He knows." She raised her eyes to mine and began to tremble. "Can't you see I'm afraid?" she cried. "I'm afraid of them. Take me away and I'll tell you, but I'm afraid of them."

Mimi laughed at me. "You asked for it. It serves you right."

Gilbert was blushing. "It's so silly," he mumbled.

I said: "Sure, I'll take you away, but I'd like to have it out now while we're all together."

Dorothy shook her head. "I'm afraid."

Mimi said: "I wish you wouldn't baby her so, Nick. It only makes her worse. She--"

I asked Nora: "What do you say?"

She stood up and stretched without lifting her arms. Her face was pink and lovely as it always is when she has been sleeping. She smiled drowsily at me and said: "Let's go home. I don't like these people. Come on, get your hat and coat, Dorothy."

Mimi said to Dorothy: "Go to bed."

Dorothy put the tips of the fingers of her left hand to her mouth and whimpered through them: "Don't let her beat me, Nick."

I was watching Mimi, whose face wore a placid half-smile, but her nostrils moved with her breathing and I could hear her breathing.

Nora went around to Dorothy. "Come on, we'll wash your face and--"

Mimi made an animal noise in her throat, muscles thickened on the back of her neck, and she put her weight on the balls of her feet.

Nora stepped between Mimi and Dorothy. I caught Mimi by a shoulder as she started forward, put my other arm around her waist from behind, and lifted her off her feet. She screamed and hit back at me with her fists and her hard sharp high heels made dents in my shins.

Nora pushed Dorothy out of the room and stood in the doorway watching us. Her face was very live. I saw it clearly, sharply: everything else was blurred. When clumsy, ineffectual blows on my back and shoulder brought me around to find Gilbert pommeling me, I could see him but dimly and I hardly felt the contact when I shoved him aside. "Cut it out. I don't want to hurt you, Gilbert." I carried Mimi over to the sofa and dumped her on her back on it, sat on her knees, got a wrist in each hand.

Gilbert was at me again. I tried to pop his kneecap, but kicked him too low, kicked his leg from under him. He went down on the floor in a tangle. I kicked at him again, missed, and said: "We can fight afterwards. Get some water."

Mimi's face was becoming purple. Her eyes protruded, glassy, senseless, enormous. Saliva bubbled and hissed between clenched teeth with her breathing, and her red throat—her whole body—was a squirming mass of veins and muscles swollen until it seemed they must burst. Her wrists were hot in my hands and sweat made them hard to hold.

Nora beside me with a glass of water was a welcome sight. "Chuck it in her face," I said.

Nora chucked it. Mimi separated her teeth to gasp and she shut her eyes. She moved her head violently from side to side, but there was less violence in the squirming of her body.

"Do it again," I said.

The second glass of water brought a spluttering protest from Mimi and the fight went out of her body. She lay still, limp, panting.

I took my hands away from her wrists and stood up. Gilbert, standing on one foot, was leaning against a table nursing the leg I had kicked. Dorothy, big-eyed and pale, was in the doorway, undecided whether to come in or run off and hide. Nora, beside me, holding the empty glass in her hand, asked: "Think she's all right?"

"Sure."

Presently Mimi opened her eyes, tried to blink the water out of them. I put a handkerchief in her hand. She wiped her face, gave a long shivering sigh, and sat up on the sofa. She looked around the room, still blinking a little. When she saw me she smiled feebly. There was guilt in her smile, but nothing you could call remorse. She touched her hair with an unsteady hand and said: "I've certainly been drowned."

I said: "Some day you're going into one of those things and not come out of it."

She looked past me at her son. "Gil. What's happened to you?" she asked.

He hastily took his hand off his leg and put his foot down on the floor. "I-uh-nothing," he stammered. "I'm perfectly all right." He smoothed his hair, straightened his necktie.

She began to laugh. "Oh, Gil, did you really try to protect me? And from Nick?" Her laughter increased. "It was awfully sweet of you, but awfully silly. Why, he's a monster, Gil. Nobody could—" She put my handkerchief over her mouth and rocked back and forth.

I looked sidewise at Nora. Her mouth was set and her eyes were almost black with anger. I touched her arm. "Let's blow. Give your mother a drink, Gilbert. She'll be all right in a minute or two."

Dorothy, hat and coat in her hands, tiptoed to the outer door. Nora and I found our hats and coats and followed her out, leaving Mimi laughing into my handkerchief on the sofa.

None of the three of us had much to say in the taxicab that carried us over to the Normandie. Nora was brooding, Dorothy seemed still pretty frightened, and I was tired—it had been a full day.

It was nearly five o'clock when we got home. Asta greeted us boisterously. I lay down on the floor to play with her while Nora went into the pantry to make coffee. Dorothy wanted to tell me something that happened to her when she was a little child.

I said: "No. You tried that Monday. What is it? a gag? It's late. What was it you were afraid to tell me over there?"

"But you'd understand better if you'd let me—"

"You said *that* Monday. I'm not a psychoanalyst. I don't know anything about early influences. I don't give a damn about them. And I'm tired—I been ironing all day."

She pouted at me. "You seem to be trying to make it as hard for me as you can."

"Listen, Dorothy," I said, "you either know something you were afraid to say in front of Mimi and Gilbert or you don't. If you do, spit it out. I'll ask you about any of it I find myself not understanding."

She twisted a fold of her skirt and looked sulkily at it, but when she raised her eyes they became bright and excited. She spoke in a whisper loud enough for anybody in the room to hear: "Gil's been seeing my father and he saw him today and my father told him who killed Miss Wolf."

"Who?"

She shook her head. "He wouldn't tell me. He'd just tell me that."

"And that's what you were afraid to say in front of Gil and Mimi?"

"Yes. You'd understand that if you'd let me tell you—"

"Something that happened when you were a little child. Well, I won't. Stop it. What else did he tell you?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing about Nunheim?"

"No, nothing."



"Where is your father?"

"Gil didn't tell me."

"When did he meet him?"

"He didn't tell me. Please don't be mad, Nick. I've told you everything he told me."

"And a fat lot it is," I growled. "When'd he tell you this?"

"Tonight. He was telling me when you came in my room, and, honest, that's all he told me."

I said: "It'd be swell if just once one of you people would make a clear and complete statement about something—it wouldn't matter what."

Nora came in with the coffee. "What's worrying you now, son?" she asked.

"Things," I said, "riddles, lies, and I'm too old and too tired for them to be any fun. Let's go back to San Francisco."

"Before New Year's?"

"Tomorrow, today."

"I'm willing." She gave me a cup. "We can fly back, if you want, and be there for New Year's Eve."

Dorothy said tremulously: "I didn't lie to you, Nick. I told you everything I— Please, please don't be mad with me. I'm so—" She stopped talking to sob.

I rubbed Asta's head and groaned.

Nora said: "We're all worn out and jumpy. Let's send the pup downstairs for the night and turn in and do our talking after we've had some rest. Come on, Dorothy, I'll bring your coffee into the bedroom and give you some night-clothes."

Dorothy got up, said, "Good-night," to me, "I'm sorry I'm so silly," and followed Nora out.

When Nora returned she sat down on the floor beside me. "Our Dorry does her share of weeping and whining," she said. "Admitting life's not too pleasant for her just now, still. . ." She yawned. "What was her fearsome secret?"

I told her what Dorothy had told me. "It sounds like a lot of hooley."

"Why?"

"Why not? Everything else we've got from them has been hooley."

Nora yawned again. "That may be good enough for a detective, but it's not convincing enough for me. Listen, why don't we make a list of all the suspects and all the motives and clues, and check them off against--"

"You do it. I'm going to bed. What's a clue, Mamma?"

"It's like when Gilbert tiptoed over to the phone tonight when I was alone in the living-room, and he thought I was asleep, and told the operator not to put through any in-coming calls until morning."

"Well, well."

"And," she said, "it's like Dorothy discovering that she had Aunt Alice's key all the time."

"Well, well."

"And it's like Studsy nudging Morelli under the table when he started to tell you about the drunken cousin of--what was it?--Dick O'Brien's that Julia Wolf knew."

I got up and put our cups on a table. "I don't see how any detective can hope to get along without being married to you, but, just the same, you're overdoing it. Studsy nudging Morelli is my idea of something to spend a lot of time not worrying about. I'd rather worry about whether they pushed Sparrow around to keep me from being hurt or to keep me from being told something. I'm sleepy."

"So am I. Tell me something, Nick. Tell me the truth: when you were wrestling with Mimi, didn't you have an erection?"

"Oh, a little."

She laughed and got up from the floor. "If you aren't a disgusting old lecher," she said. "Look, it's daylight."

## 26

Nora shook me awake at quarter past ten. "The telephone," she said. "It's Herbert Macaulay and he says it's important."

I went into the bedroom—I had slept in the living-room—to the telephone. Dorothy was sleeping soundly. I mumbled, "Hello," into the telephone,

Macaulay said: "It's too early for that lunch, but I've got to see you right away. Can I come up now?"

"Sure. Come up for breakfast."

"I've had it. Get yours and I'll be up in fifteen minutes."

"Right."

Dorothy opened her eyes less than half-way, said, "It must be late," sleepily, turned over, and returned to unconsciousness.

I put cold water on my face and hands, brushed my teeth and hair, and went back to the living-room. "He's coming up," I told Nora. "He's had breakfast, but you'd better order some coffee for him. I want chicken livers."

"Am I invited to your party or do I—"

"Sure. You've never met Macaulay, have you? He's a pretty good guy. I was attached to his outfit for a few days once, up around Vaux, and we looked each other up after the war. He threw a couple of jobs my way, including the Wynant one. How about a drop of something to cut the phlegm?"

"Why don't you stay sober today?"

"We didn't come to New York to stay sober. Want to see a hockey game tonight?"

"I'd like to." She poured me a drink and went to order breakfast.

I looked through the morning papers. They had the news of Jorgensen's being picked up by the Boston police and of Nunheim's murder, but further developments of what the tabloids called "The Hell's Kitchen Gang War," the arrest of "Prince Mike" Gerguson, and an interview with the "Jafsie" of the Lindbergh kidnapping negotiations got more space.

Macaulay and the bellboy who brought Asta up arrived together. Asta liked Macaulay because when he patted her he gave her something to set her weight against: she was never very fond of gentleness.

He had lines around his mouth this morning and some of the rosininess was gone from his cheeks. "Where'd the police get this new line?" he asked. "Do they think—" He broke off as Nora came in. She had dressed.

"Nora, this is Herbert Macaulay," I said. "My wife."

They shook hands and Nora said. "Nick would only let me order some coffee for you. Can't I—"

"No, thanks, I've just finished breakfast."

I said: "Now what's this about the police?"

He hesitated.

"Nora knows practically everything I know," I assured him, "so unless it's something you'd rather not—"

"No, no, nothing like that," he said. "It's—well—for Mrs. Charles's sake. I don't want to cause her anxiety."

"Then out with it. She only worries about things she doesn't know. What's the new police line?"

"Lieutenant Guild came to see me this morning," he said. "First he showed me a piece of watch-chain with a knife attached to it and asked me if I'd ever seen them before. I had: they were Wynant's. I told him I thought I had: I thought they looked like Wynant's. Then he asked me if I knew of any way in which they could have come into anybody else's possession and, after some beating about the bush, I discovered that by anybody else he meant you or Mimi. I told him certainly—Wynant could have given them to either of you, you could have stolen them or found them on the street or have been given them by somebody who stole them or found them on the street, or you could have got them from somebody Wynant gave them to. There were other ways, too, for you to have got them, I told him, but he knew I was kidding him, so he wouldn't let me tell him about them."

There were spots of color in Nora's cheeks and her eyes were dark. "The idiot!"

"Now, now," I said. "Maybe I should have warned you—he was heading in that direction last night. I think it's likely my old pal Mimi gave him a prod or two. What else did he turn the searchlight on?"

"He wanted to know about—what he asked was: 'Do you figure Charles and the Wolf dame was still playing around together? Or was that all washed up?'"

"That's the Mimi touch, all right," I said. "What'd you tell him?"

"I told him I didn't know whether you were 'still' playing around together because I didn't know that you had ever played around together, and reminded him that you hadn't been living in New York for a long time anyway."

Nora asked me: "Did you?"

I said: "Don't try to make a liar out of Mac. What'd he say to that?"

"Nothing. He asked me if I thought Jorgensen knew about you and Mimi and, when I asked him what about you and Mimi, he accused me of acting the innocent—they were his words—so we didn't get very far. He was interested in the times I had seen you, also, where and when to the exact inch and second."

"That's nice," I said. "I've got lousy alibis."

A waiter came in with our breakfast. We talked about this and that until he had set the table and gone away.

Then Macaulay said: "You've nothing to be afraid of. I'm going to turn Wynant over to the police." His voice was unsteady and a little choked.

"Are you sure he did it?" I asked. "I'm not."

He said simply: "I know." He cleared his throat. "Even if there was a chance in a thousand of my being wrong—and there isn't—he's a madman, Charles. He shouldn't be loose."

"That's probably right enough," I began, "and if you know—"

"I know," he repeated. "I saw him the afternoon he killed her; it couldn't've been half an hour after he'd killed her, though I didn't know that, didn't even know she'd been killed. I—well—I know it now."

"You met him in Hermann's office?"

"What?"

"You were supposed to have been in the office of a man named Hermann, on Fifty-seventh Street, from around three o'clock till around four that afternoon. At least, that's what the police told me."

"That's right," he said. "I mean that's the story they got. What really happened: after I failed to find Wynant or any

news of him at the Plaza and phoned my office and Julia with no better results, I gave him up and started walking down to Hermann's. He's a mining engineer, a client of mine; I had just finished drawing up some articles of incorporation for him, and there were some minor changes to be made in them. When I got to Fifty-seventh Street I suddenly got a feeling that I was being followed—you know the feeling. I couldn't think of any reason for anybody shadowing me, but, still, I'm a lawyer and there might be. Anyhow, I wanted to find out, so I turned east on Fifty-seventh and walked over to Madison and still wasn't sure. There was a small sallow man I thought I'd seen around the Plaza, but— The quickest way to find out seemed to be by taking a taxi, so I did that and told the driver to drive east. There was too much traffic there for me to see whether this small man or anybody else took a taxi after me, so I had my driver turn south at Third, east again on Fifty-sixth, and south again on Second Avenue, and by that time I was pretty sure a yellow taxi was following me. I couldn't see whether my small man was in it, of course; it wasn't close enough for that. And at the next corner, when a red light stopped us, I saw Wynant. He was in a taxicab going west on Fifty-fifth Street. Naturally, that didn't surprise me very much: we were only two blocks from Julia's and I took it for granted she hadn't wanted me to know he was there when I phoned and that he was now on his way over to meet me at the Plaza. He was never very punctual. So I told my driver to turn west, but at Lexington Avenue—we were half a block behind him—Wynant's taxicab turned south. That wasn't the way to the Plaza and wasn't even the way to my office, so I said to hell with him and turned my attention back to the taxi following me—and it wasn't there any more. I kept a look-out behind all the way over to Hermann's and saw no sign at all of anybody following me."

"What time was it when you saw Wynant?" I asked.

"It must've been fifteen or twenty minutes past three. It was twenty minutes to four when I got to Hermann's and I imagine that was twenty or twenty-five minutes later. Weil, Hermann's

secretary—Louise Jacobs, the girl I was with when I saw you last night—told me he had been locked up in a conference all afternoon, but would probably be through in a few minutes, and he was, and I got through with him in ten or fifteen minutes and went back to my office.”

“I take it you weren’t close enough to Wynant to see whether he looked excited, was wearing his watch-chain, smelled of gunpowder—things like that.”

“That’s right. All I saw was his profile going past, but don’t think I’m not sure it was Wynant.”

“I won’t. Go ahead,” I said.

“He didn’t phone again. I’d been back about an hour when the police phoned—Julia was dead. Now you must understand that I didn’t think Wynant had killed her—not for a minute. You can understand that—you still don’t think he did. So when I went over there and the police began to ask me questions about him and I could see they suspected him, I did what ninety-nine out of a hundred lawyers would’ve done for their clients—I said nothing about having seen him in that neighborhood at about the time that the murder must have been committed. I told them what I told you—about having the date with him and him not showing up—and let them understand that I had gone over to Hermann’s straight from the Plaza.”

“That’s understandable enough,” I agreed. “There was no sense in your saying anything until you had heard his side of the story.”

“Exactly and, well, the catch is I never heard his side of the story. I’d expected him to show up, phone me, something, but he didn’t—until Tuesday, when I got that letter from him from Philadelphia, and there was not a word in it about his failure to meet me Friday, nothing about—but you saw the letter. What’d you think of it?”

“You mean did it sound guilty?”

“Yes.”

“Not particularly,” I said. “It’s about what could be expected from him if he didn’t kill her—no great alarm over the police suspecting him except as it might interfere with his work,

a desire to have it all cleaned up with no inconvenience to him—not too bright a letter to have come from anybody else, but in line with his particular form of goofiness. I can see him sending it off without the faintest notion that the best thing he could do would be to account for his own actions on the day of the murder. How sure are you he was coming from Julia's when you saw him?"

"I'm sure now. I thought it likely at first. Then I thought he may have been to his shop. It's on First Avenue, just a few blocks from where I saw him, and, though it's been closed since he went away, we renewed the lease last month and everything's there waiting for him to come back to it, and he could have been there that afternoon. The police couldn't find anything there to show whether he had or hadn't."

"I meant to ask you: there was some talk about his having grown whiskers. Was he—"

"No—the same long bony face with the same ragged near-white mustache."

"Another thing: there was a fellow named Nunheim killed yesterday, a small—"

"I'm coming to that," he said.

"I was thinking about the little fellow you thought might be shadowing you."

Macaulay stared at me. "You mean that might've been Nunheim?"

"I don't know. I was wondering."

"And I don't know," he said. "I never saw Nunheim, far as I—"

"He was a little fellow, not more than five feet three, and would weigh maybe a hundred and twenty. I'd say he was thirty-five or -six. Sallow, dark hair and eyes, with the eyes set pretty close together, big mouth, long limp nose, bat-wing ears—shifty-looking."

"That could easily be him," he said, "though I didn't get too close a view of my man. I suppose the police would let me see him"—he shrugged—"not that it matters now. Where was I? Oh, yes, about not being able to get in touch with Wynant.



That put me in an uncomfortable position, since the police clearly thought I was in touch with him and lying about it. So did you, didn't you?"

"Yes," I admitted.

"And you also, like the police, probably suspected that I *had* met him, either at the Plaza or later, on the day of the murder."

"It seemed possible."

"Yes. And of course you were partly right. I had at least seen him, and seen him at a place and time that would've spelled Guilty with a capital G to the police, so, having lied instinctively and by inference, I now lied directly and deliberately. Hermann had been tied up in a conference all that afternoon and didn't know how long I had been waiting to see him. Louise Jacobs is a good friend of mine. Without going into details, I told her she could help me help a client by saying I had arrived there at a minute or two after three o'clock and she agreed readily enough. To protect her in case of trouble, I told her that if anything went wrong she could always say that she hadn't remembered what time I arrived, but that I, the next day, had casually mentioned my arrival at that time and she had no reason for doubting me—throwing the whole thing on me." Macaulay took a deep breath. "None of that's important now. What's important is that I heard from Wynant this morning."

"Another one of those screwy letters?" I asked.

"No, he phoned. I made a date with him for tonight—for you and me. I told him you wouldn't do anything for him unless you could see him, so he promised to meet us tonight. I'm going to take the police, of course. I can't go on justifying my shielding him like this. I can get him an acquittal on grounds of insanity and have him put away. That's all I can do, all I want to do."

"Have you told the police yet?"

"No. He didn't phone till just after they'd left. Anyway, I wanted to see you first. I wanted to tell you I hadn't forgotten what I owed you and—"

"Nonsense," I said.

"It's not." He turned to Nora. "I don't suppose he ever told you he saved my life once in a shell-hole in—"

"He's nuts," I told her. "He fired at a fellow and missed and I fired at him and didn't and that's all there was to it." I addressed him again: "Why don't you let the police wait awhile? Suppose you and I keep this date tonight and hear what he's got to say. We can sit on him and blow whistles when the meeting's about to break up if we're convinced he's the murderer."

Macaulay smiled wearily. "You're still doubtful, aren't you? Well, I'm willing to do it that way if you want, though it seems like a— But perhaps you'll change your mind when I tell you about our telephone conversation."

Dorothy, wearing a nightgown and a robe of Nora's, both much too long for her, came in yawning. "Oh!" she exclaimed when she saw Macaulay, and then, when she had recognized him, "Oh, hello, Mr. Macaulay. I didn't know you were here. Is there any news of my father?"

He looked at me. I shook my head. He told her: "Not yet, but perhaps we'll have some today."

I said: "Dorothy's had some, indirectly. Tell Macaulay about Gilbert."

"You mean about—about my father?" she asked hesitantly, staring at the floor.

"Oh, dear me, no," I said.

Her face flushed and she glanced reproachfully at me; then, hastily, she told Macaulay: "Gil saw my father yesterday and he told Gil who killed Miss Wolf."

"What?"

She nodded four or five times, earnestly.

Macaulay looked at me with puzzled eyes.

"This doesn't have to've happened," I reminded him. "It's what Gil says happened."

"I see. Then you think he might be—?"

"You haven't done much talking to that family since hell broke loose, have you?" I asked.

"No."

"It's an experience. They're all sex-crazy, I think, and it backs up into their heads. They start off—"

Dorothy said angrily: "I think you're horrid. I've done my best to—"

"What are you kicking about?" I demanded. "I'm giving you the break this time: I'm willing to believe Gil did tell you that. Don't expect too much of me."

Macaulay asked: "And who killed her?"

"I don't know. Gil wouldn't tell me."

"Had your brother seen him often?"

"I don't know how often. He said he had been seeing him."

"And was anything said—well—about the man Nunheim?"

"No. Nick asked me that. He didn't tell me anything else at all."

I caught Nora's eye and made signals. She stood up saying: "Let's go in the other room, Dorothy, and give these lads a chance to do whatever it is they think they're doing."

Dorothy went reluctantly, but she went out with Nora.

Macaulay said: "She's grown up to be something to look at." He cleared his throat. "I hope your wife won't—"

"Forget it. Nora's all right. You started to tell me about your conversation with Wynant."

"He phoned right after the police left and said he'd seen the ad in the *Times* and wanted to know what I wanted. I told him you weren't anxious to get yourself mixed up in his troubles and had said you wouldn't touch it at all without talking it over with him first, and we made the date for tonight. Then he asked if I'd seen Mimi and I told him I'd seen her once or twice since her return from Europe and had also seen his daughter. And then he said this: 'If my wife should ask for money, give her any sum in reason.'"

"I'll be damned," I said.

Macaulay nodded. "That's the way I felt about it. I asked him why and he said what he'd read in the morning papers had convinced him that she was Rosewater's dupe, not his confederate, and he had reason to believe she was 'kindly disposed'

towards him, Wynant. I began to see what he was up to, then, and I told him she had already turned the knife and chain over to the police. And try to guess what he said to that."

"I give up."

"He hemmed and hawed a bit—not much, mind you—and then as smooth as you like asked: 'You mean the chain and knife on the watch I left with Julia to be repaired?' "

I laughed. "What'd you say?"

"That stumped me. Before I could think up an answer he was saying: 'However, we can discuss that more fully when we meet tonight.' I asked him where and when we'd meet him and he said he'd have to phone me, he didn't know where he'd be. He's to phone me at my house at ten o'clock. He was in a hurry now, though he had seemed leisurely enough before, and hadn't time to answer any of the things I wanted to ask, so he hung up and I phoned you. What do you think of his innocence now?"

"Not as much as I did," I replied slowly. "How sure are you of hearing from him at ten tonight?"

Macaulay shrugged. "You know as much about that as I do."

"Then if I were you I wouldn't bother the police till we've grabbed our wild man and can turn him over to them. This story of yours isn't going to make them exactly love you and, even if they don't throw you in the can right away, they'll make things pretty disagreeable for you if Wynant gives us a run-around tonight."

"I know, but I'd like to get the load off my shoulders."

"A few hours more oughtn't to matter much," I said. "Did either of you say anything about his not keeping the date at the Plaza?"

"No. I didn't get a chance to ask him. Well, if you say wait, I'll wait, but—"

"Let's wait till tonight, anyhow, till he phones you—if he does—and then we can make up our minds whether to take the police along."

"You don't think he'll phone?"

"I'm not too sure," I said. "He didn't keep his last date with you, and he seems to have gone pretty vague on you as soon as he learned that Mimi had turned in the watch-chain and knife. I wouldn't be too optimistic about it. We'll see, though. I'd better get out to your house at about nine o'clock, hadn't I?"

"Come for dinner."

"I can't, but I'll make it as early as I can, in case he's ahead of time. We'll want to move fast. Where do you live?"

Macaulay gave me his address, in Scarsdale, and stood up. "Will you say good-by to Mrs. Charles for me and thank— Oh, by the way, I hope you didn't misunderstand me about Harrison Quinn last night. I meant only just what I said, that I'd had bad luck taking his advice on the market. I didn't mean to insinuate that there was anything—you know—or that he might not've made money for his other customers."

"I understand," I said, and called Nora.

She and Macaulay shook hands and made polite speeches to each other and he pushed Asta around a little and said, "Make it as early as you can," to me and went away.

"There goes the hockey game," I said, "unless you find somebody else to go with."

"Did I miss anything?" Nora asked.

"Not much." I told her what Macaulay had told me. "And don't ask me what I think of it. I don't know. I know Wynant's crazy, but he's not acting like a crazy man and he's not acting like a murderer. He's acting like a man playing some kind of game. God only knows what the game is."

"I think," she said, "that he's shielding somebody else."

"Why don't you think he did it?"

She looked surprised. "Because you don't."

I said that was a swell reason. "Who is the somebody else?"

"I don't know yet. Now don't make fun of me: I've thought about it a lot. It wouldn't be Macaulay, because he's using him to help shield whoever it is and—"

"And it wouldn't be me," I suggested, "because he wants to use me."

"That's right," she said, "and you're going to feel very silly if you make fun of me and then I guess who it is before you do. And it wouldn't be either Mimi or Jorgensen, because he tried to throw suspicion on them. And it wouldn't be Nunheim, because he was most likely killed by the same person and, furthermore, wouldn't have to be shielded now. And it wouldn't be Morelli, because Wynant was jealous of him and they'd had a row." She frowned at me. "I wish you'd found out more about that big fat man they called Sparrow and that big red-haired woman."

"But how about Dorothy and Gilbert?"

"I wanted to ask you about them. Do you think he's got any very strong paternal feeling for them?"

"No."

"You're probably just trying to discourage me," she said. "Well, knowing them, it's hard to think either of them might've been guilty, but I tried to throw out my personal feelings and stick to logic. Before I went to sleep last night I made a list of all the—"

"There's nothing like a little logic-sticking to ward off insomnia. It's like—"

"Don't be so damned patronizing. Your performance so far has been a little less than dazzling."

"I didn't mean no harm," I said and kissed her. "That a new dress?"

"Ah! Changing the subject, you coward."

## 27

I went to see Guild early in the afternoon and went to work on him as soon as we had shaken hands. "I didn't bring my lawyer along. I thought it looked better if I came by myself."

He wrinkled his forehead and shook his head as if I had hurt him. "Now it was like that," he said patiently.

"It was too much like that."

He sighed. "I wouldn't've thought you'd make the mistake that a lot of people make thinking just because we— You know we got to look at every angle, Mr. Charles."

"That sounds familiar. Well, what do you want to know?"

"All I want to know is who killed her—and him."

"Try asking Gilbert," I suggested.

Guild pursed his lips. "Why him exactly?"

"He told his sister he knew who did it, told her he got it from Wynant."

"You mean he's been seeing the old man?"

"So she says he said. I haven't had a chance to ask him about it."

He squinted his watery eyes at me. "Just what is that lay-out over there, Mr. Charles?"

"The Jorgensen family? You probably know as much about it as I do."

"I don't," he said, "and that's a fact. I just can't size them up at all. This Mrs. Jorgensen, now, what is she?"

"A blonde."

He nodded gloomily. "Uh-huh, and that's all I know. But look, you've known them a long time and from what she says you and her—"

"And me and her daughter," I said, "and me and Julia Wolf and me and Mrs. Astor. I'm hell with the women."

He held up a hand. "I'm not saying I believe everything she says, and there's nothing to get sore about. You're taking the wrong attitude, if you don't mind me saying it. You're acting like you thought we were out to get you, and that's all wrong, absolutely all wrong."

"Maybe, but you've been talking double to me ever since last—"

He looked at me with steady pale eyes and said calmly: "I'm a copper and I got my work to do."

"That's reasonable enough. You told me to come in today. What do you want?"

"I didn't tell you to come in, I asked you."

"All right. What do you want?"

"I don't want this," he said. "I don't want anything like this. We've been talking man to man up to this time and I'd kind of like to go on **thataway.**"

"You made the change."

"I don't think that's a fact. Look here, Mr. Charles, would you take your oath, or even just tell me straight out, that you've been emptying your pockets to me right along?"

There was no use saying yes—he would not have believed me. I said: "Practically."

"Practically, yes," he grumbled. "Everybody's been telling me practically the whole truth. What I want's some impractical son of a gun that'll shoot the works."

I could sympathize with him: I knew how he felt. I said: "Maybe nobody you've found knows the whole truth."

He made an unpleasant face. "That's very likely, ain't it? Listen, Mr. Charles, I've talked to everybody I could find. If you can find any more for me, I'll talk to them too. You mean Wynant? Don't you suppose we got every facility the department's got working night and day trying to turn him up?"

"There's his son," I suggested.

"There's his son," he agreed. He called in Andy and a swarthy bow-legged man named Kline. "Get me that Wynant kid—the punk—I want to talk to him." They went out. He said: "See, I want people to talk to."

I said: "Your nerves are in pretty bad shape this afternoon, aren't they? Are you bringing Jorgensen down from Boston?"

He shrugged his big shoulders. "His story listens all right to me. I don't know. Want to tell me what you think of it?"

"Sure."

"I'm kind of jumpy this afternoon, for a fact," he said. "I didn't get a single solitary wink of sleep last night. It's a hell of a life. I don't know why I stick at it. A fellow can get a piece of land and some wire fencing and a few head of silver fox and— Well, anyways, when you people scared Jorgensen off back in '25, he says he lit out for Germany, leaving his wife in the lurch—though he don't say much about that—and changing his name to give you more trouble finding him, and



on the same account he's afraid to work at his regular job—he calls himself some kind of a technician or something—so pickings are kind of slim. He says he worked at one thing and another, whatever he could get, but near as I can figure out he was mostly gigoloing, if you know what I mean, and not finding too many heavy-money dames. Well, along about '27 or '28 he's in Milan—that's a city in Italy—and he sees in the *Paris Herald* where this Mimi, recently divorced wife of Clyde Miller Wynant, has arrived in Paris. He don't know her personally and she don't know him, but he knows she's a dizzy blonde that likes men and fun and hasn't got much sense. He figures a bunch of Wynant's dough must've come to her with the divorce and, the way he looks at it, any of it he could take away from her wouldn't be any more than what Wynant had gypped him out of—he'd only be getting some of what belonged to him. So he scrapes up the fare to Paris and goes up there. All right so far?"

"Sounds all right."

"That's what I thought. Well, he don't have any trouble getting to know her in Paris—either picking her up or getting somebody to introduce him or whatever happened—and the rest of it's just as easy. She goes for him in a big way—big, according to him—right off the bat, and the first thing you know she's one jump ahead of him, she's thinking about marrying him. Naturally he don't try to talk her out of that. She'd gotten a lump sum—two hundred thousand berries, by God!—out of Wynant instead of alimony, so her marrying again wasn't stopping any payments, and it'll put him right in the middle of the cash-drawer. So they do it. According to him, it was a trick marriage up in some mountains he says are between Spain and France and was done by a Spanish priest on what was really French soil, which don't make it legal, but I figure he's just trying to discourage a bigamy rap. Personally, I don't care one way or the other. The point is he got his hands on the dough and kept them on it till there wasn't any more dough. And all this time, understand, he says she didn't know he was anybody but Christian Jorgensen, a fellow she met in Paris, and

still didn't know it up to the time we grabbed him in Boston. Still sound all right?"

"Still sounds all right," I said, "except, as you say, about the marriage, and even that could be all right."

"Un-huh, and what difference does it make anyways? So comes the winter and the bank-roll's getting skinny and he's getting ready to take a run-out on her with the last of it, and then she says maybe they could come back to America and tap Wynant for some more. He thinks that's fair enough if it can be done, and she thinks it can be done, so they get on a boat and—"

"The story cracks a little there," I said.

"What makes you think so? He's not figuring on going to Boston, where he knows his first wife is, and he's figuring on keeping out of the way of the few people that know him, including especially Wynant, and somebody's told him there's a statute of limitation making everything just lovely after seven years. He don't figure he's running much risk. They ain't going to stay here long."

"I still don't like that part of his story," I insisted, "but go ahead."

"Well, the second day he's here—while they're still trying to find Wynant—he gets a bad break. He runs into a friend of his first wife's—this Olga Fenton—on the street and she recognizes him. He tries to talk her out of tipping off the first wife and does manage to stall her along a couple days with a moving-picture story he makes up—what an imagination that guy's got!—but he don't fool her long, and she goes to her parson and tells him about it and asks him what she ought to do and he says she ought to tell the first wife, and so she does, and the next time she sees Jorgensen she tells him what she'd done, and he lights out for Boston to try to keep his wife from kicking up trouble and we pick him up there."

"How about his visit to the hock-shop?" I asked.

"That was part of it. He says there was a train for Boston leaving in a few minutes and he didn't have any dough with him and didn't have time to go home for some—besides not

being anxious to face the second wife till he had the first one quieted down—and the banks were closed, so he soaked his watch. It checks up.”

“Did you see the watch?”

“I can. Why?”

“I was wondering. You don’t think it was once on the other end of that piece of chain Mimi turned over to you?”

He sat up straight. “By God!” Then he squinted at me suspiciously and asked: “Do you know anything about it or are you—”

“No. I was just wondering. What does he say about the murders now? Who does he think did them?”

“Wynant. He admits for a while he thought Mimi might’ve, but he says she convinced him different. He claims she wouldn’t tell him what she had on Wynant. He might be just trying to cover himself up on that. I don’t guess there’s any doubt about them meaning to use it to shake him down for that money they wanted.”

“Then you don’t think she planted the knife and chain?”

Guild pulled down the ends of his mouth. “She could’ve planted them to shake him down with. What’s wrong with that?”

“It’s a little complicated for a fellow like me,” I said. “Find out if Face Peppler’s still in the Ohio pen?”

“Uh-huh. He gets out next week. That accounts for the diamond ring. He had a pal of his on the outside send it to her for him. Seems they were planning to get married and go straight together after he got out, or some such. Anyways, the warden says he saw letters passing between them reading like that. This Peppler won’t tell the warden that he knows anything that’ll help us, and the warden don’t call to mind anything that was in their letters that’s any good to us. Of course, even this much helps some, with the motive. Say Wynant’s jealous and she’s wearing this other guy’s ring and getting ready to go away with him. That’ll—” he broke off to answer his telephone. “Yes,” he said into it. “Yes. . . . What? . . . Sure. . . . Sure, but

leave somebody there. . . . That's right." He pushed the telephone aside. "Another bum steer on that West Twenty-ninth Street killing yesterday."

"Oh," I said. "I thought I heard Wynant's name. You know how some telephone voices carry."

He blushed, cleared his throat. "Maybe something sounded like it—*why not*, I guess. Uh-huh, that could sound like it—*why not*. I almost forgot: we looked up that fellow Sparrow for you."

"What'd you find out?"

"It looks like there's nothing there for us. His name's Jim Brophy. It figures out that he was making a play for that girl of Nunheim's and she was sore at you and he was just drunk enough to think he could put himself in solid with her by taking a poke at you."

"A nice idea," I said. "I hope you didn't make any trouble for Studsy."

"A friend of yours? He's an ex-con, you know, with a record as long as your arm."

"Sure. I sent him over once." I started to gather up my hat and overcoat. "You're busy. I'll run along and—"

"No, no," he said. "Stick around if you got the time. I got a couple things coming in that'll maybe interest you, and you can give me a hand with that Wynant kid, too, maybe."

I sat down again.

"Maybe you'd like a drink," he suggested, opening a drawer of his desk, but I had never had much luck with policemen's liquor, so I said: "No, thanks."

His telephone rang again and he said into it: "Yes. . . . Yes. . . . That's all right. Come on in." This time no words leaked out to me.

He rocked back in his chair and put his feet on his desk. "Listen, I'm on the level about that silver fox farming and I want to ask you what you think of California for a place."

I was trying to decide whether to tell him about the lion and ostrich farms in the lower part of the state when the door opened and a fat red-haired man brought Gilbert Wynant in. One

of Gilbert's eyes was completely shut by swollen flesh around it and his left knee showed through a tear in his pants-leg.

I said to Guild: "When you say bring 'em in, they bring 'em in, don't they?"

"Wait," he told me. "This is more'n you think" He addressed the fat red-haired man: "Go ahead, Flint, let's have it."

Flint wiped his mouth with the back of a hand. "He's a wildcat for fair, the young fellow. He don't look tough, but, man, he didn't want to come along, I can tell you that. And can he run!"

Guild growled: "You're a hero and I'll see the Commissioner about your medal right away, but never mind that now. Talk turkey."

"I wasn't saying I did anything great," Flint protested. "I was just—"

"I don't give a damn what you did," Guild said. "I want to know what he did."

"Yes, sir, I was getting to that. I relieved Morgan at eight o'clock this morning and everything went along smooth and quiet as per usual, with not a creature was stirring, as the fellow says, till along about ten minutes after two, and then what do I hear but a key in the lock." He sucked in his lips and gave us a chance to express our amazement.

"The Wolf dame's apartment," Guild explained to me. "I had a hunch."

"And what a hunch!" Flint exclaimed, practically top-heavy with admiration. "Man, what a hunch!" Guild glared at him and he went on hastily: "Yes, sir, a key, and then the door opens and this young fellow comes in." He grinned proudly, affectionately, at Gilbert. "Scared stiff, he looked, and when I went for him he was out and away like a streak and it wasn't till the first floor that I caught him, and then, by golly, he put up a tussle and I had to bat him in the eye to tone him down. He don't look tough, but—"

"What'd he do in the apartment?" Guild asked.

"He didn't have a chance to do nothing. I—"

"You mean you jumped him without waiting to see what he was up to?" Guild's neck bulged over the edge of his collar, and his face was as red as Flint's hair.

"I thought it was best not to take no chances."

Guild stared at me with angry incredulous eyes. I did my best to keep my face blank. He said in a choking voice: "That'll do, Flint. Wait outside."

The red-haired man seemed puzzled. He said, "Yes, sir," slowly. "Here's his key." He put the key on Guild's desk and went to the door. There he twisted his head over a shoulder to say: "He claims he's Clyde Wynant's son." He laughed merrily.

Guild, still having trouble with his voice, said: "Oh, he does, does he?"

"Yeah. I seen him somewhere before. I got an idea he used to belong to Big Shorty Dolan's mob. Seems to me I used to see him around—"

"Get out!" Guild snarled, and Flint got out. Guild groaned from deep down in his big body. "That mugg gets me. Big Shorty Dolan's mob. Christ." He shook his head hopelessly and addressed Gilbert: "Well, son?"

Gilbert said: "I know I shouldn't've done it."

"That's a fair start," Guild said genially. His face was becoming normal again. "We all make mistakes. Pull yourself up a chair and let's see what we can do about getting you out of the soup. Want anything for that eye?"

"No, thank you, it's quite all right." Gilbert moved a chair two or three inches towards Guild and sat down.

"Did that bum smack you just to be doing something?"

"No, no, it was my fault. I—I did resist."

"Oh, well," Guild said, "nobody likes to be arrested, I guess. Now what's the trouble?"

Gilbert looked at me with his one good eye.

"You're in as bad a hole as Lieutenant Guild wants to put you," I told him. "You'll make it easy for yourself by making it easy for him."

Guild nodded earnestly. "And that's a fact." He settled himself comfortably in his chair and asked, in a friendly tone: "Where'd you get the key?"

"My father sent it to me in his letter." He took a white envelope from his pocket and gave it to Guild.

I went around behind Guild and looked at the envelope over his shoulder. The address was typewritten, *Mr. Gilbert Wynant, The Courtland*, and there was no postage stamp stuck on it.

"When'd you get it?" I asked.

"It was at the desk when I got in last night, around ten o'clock. I didn't ask the clerk how long it had been there, but I don't suppose it was there when I went out with you, or they'd have given it to me."

Inside the envelope were two sheets of paper covered with the familiar unskillful typewriting. Guild and I read together:

*Dear Gilbert:*

*If all these years have gone by without my having communicated with you, it is only because your mother wished it so and if now I break this silence with a request for your assistance it is because only great need could make me go against your mother's wishes. Also you are a man now and I feel that you yourself are the one to decide whether or not we should go on being strangers or whether we should act in accordance with our ties of blood. That I am in an embarrassing situation now in connection with Julia Wolf's so-called murder I think you know and I trust that you still have remaining enough affection for me to at least hope that I am in all ways guiltless of any complicity therein, which is indeed the case. I turn to you now for help in demonstrating my innocence once and for all to the police and to the world with every confidence that even could I not count on your affection for me I nevertheless could count on your natural desire to do anything within your power to keep unblemished the name that is yours and your sister's as well as your Father's. I turn to you also because while I have a lawyer who is able and*

*who believes in my innocence and who is leaving no stone unturned to prove it and have hopes of engaging Mr. Nick Charles to assist him I cannot ask either of them to undertake what is after all a patently illegal act nor do I know anybody else except you that I dare confide in. What I wish you to do is this, tomorrow go to Julia Wolf's apartment at 411 East 54th St. to which the enclosed key will admit you and between the pages of a book called The Grand Manner you will find a certain paper or statement which you are to read and destroy immediately. You are to be sure you destroy it completely leaving not so much as an ash and when you have read it you will know why this must be done and will understand why I have entrusted this task to you. In the event that something should develop to make a change in our plans advisable I will call you on the telephone late tonight. If you do not hear from me I will telephone you tomorrow evening to learn if you have carried out my instructions and to make arrangements for a meeting. I have every confidence that you will realize the tremendous responsibility I am placing on your shoulders and that my confidence is not misplaced.*

*Affectionately,*

*Your Father*

Wynant's sprawling signature was written in ink beneath "Your Father."

Guild waited for me to say something. I waited for him. After a little of that he asked Gilbert: "And did he phone?"

"No, sir."

"How do you know?" I asked. "Didn't you tell the operator not to put any calls through?"

"I—yes, I did. I was afraid you'd find out who it was if he called up while you were there, but he'd've left some kind of message with the operator, I think, and he didn't."

"Then you haven't been seeing him?"

"No."



"And he didn't tell you who killed Julia Wolf?"

"No."

"You were lying to Dorothy?"

He lowered his head and nodded at the floor. "I was—it was—I suppose it was jealousy really." He looked up at me now and his face was pink. "You see, Dorry used to look up to me and think I knew more than anybody else about almost everything and—you know—she'd come to me if there was anything she wanted to know and she always did what I told her, and then, when she got to seeing you, it was different. She looked up to you and respected you more— She naturally would, I mean, she'd've been silly if she hadn't, because there's no comparison, of course, but I—I suppose I was jealous and resented—well, not exactly resented it, because I looked up to you too—but I wanted to do something to impress her again—show off, I guess you'd call it—and when I got that letter I pretended I'd been seeing my father and he'd told me who committed those murders, so she'd think I knew things even you didn't." He stopped, out of breath, and wiped his face with a handkerchief.

I outwaited Guild again until presently he said: "Well, I guess there ain't been a great deal of harm done, sonny, if you're sure you ain't doing harm by holding back some other things we ought to know."

The boy shook his head. "No, sir, I'm not holding back anything."

"You don't know anything about that knife and chain your mother give us?"

"No, sir, and I didn't know a thing about it till after she had given it to you."

"How is she?" I asked.

"Oh, she's all right, I think, though she said she was going to stay in bed today."

Guild narrowed his eyes. "What's the matter with her?"

"Hysteria," I told him. "She and the daughter had a row last night and she blew up."

"A row about what?"

"God knows—one of those feminine brain-storms."

Guild said, "Hm-m-m," and scratched his chin.

"Was Flint right in saying you didn't get a chance to hunt for your paper?" I asked the boy.

"Yes. I hadn't even had time to shut the door when he ran at me."

"They're grand detectives I got working for me," Guild growled. "Didn't he yell, 'Bool!' when he jumped out at you? Never mind. Well, son, I can do one of two things, and the which depends on you. I can hold you for a while or I can let you go in exchange for a promise that you'll let me know as soon as your father gets in touch with you and let me know what he tells you and where he wants you to meet him, if any."

I spoke before Gilbert could speak: "You can't ask that of him, Guild. It's his own father."

"I can't, huh?" He scowled at me. "Ain't it for his father's good if he's innocent?"

I said nothing.

Guild's face cleared slowly. "All right, then, son, suppose I put you on a kind of parole. If your father or anybody else asks you to do anything, will you promise to tell them you can't because you give me your word of honor you wouldn't?"

The boy looked at me.

I said: "That sounds reasonable."

Gilbert said: "Yes, sir, I'll give you my word."

Guild made a large gesture with one hand. "Oke. Run along."

The boy stood up saying: "Thank you very much, sir." He turned to me. "Are you going to be—"

"Wait for me outside," I told him, "if you're not in a hurry."

"I will. Good-by, Lieutenant Guild, and thank you." He went out.

Guild grabbed his telephone and ordered *The Grand Manner* and its contents found and brought to him. That done, he clasped his hands behind his head and rocked back in his chair.

"So what?"

"It's anybody's guess," I said.

"Look here, you don't still think Wynant didn't do it?"

"What difference does it make what I think? You've got plenty on him now with what Mimi gave you."

"It makes a lot of difference," he assured me. "I'd like a lot to know what you think and why."

"My wife thinks he's trying to cover up somebody else."

"Is that so? Hm-m-m. I was never one to belittle women's intuition and, if you don't mind me saying so, Mrs. Charles is a mighty smart woman. Who does she think it is?"

"She hadn't decided, the last I heard."

He sighed. "Well, maybe that paper he sent the kid for will tell us something."

But the paper told us nothing that afternoon: Guild's men could not find it, could not find a copy of *The Grand Manner* in the dead woman's rooms.

## 29

Guild had red-haired Flint in again and put the thumb-screws on him. The red-haired man sweat away ten pounds, but he stuck to it that Gilbert had had no opportunity to disturb anything in the apartment and throughout Flint's guardianship nobody hadn't touched nothing. He did not remember having seen a book called *The Grand Manner*, but he was not a man you would expect to memorize book titles. He tried to be helpful and made idiotic suggestions until Guild chased him out.

"The kid's probably waiting for me outside," I said, "if you think talking to him again will do any good."

"Do you?"

"No."

"Well, then. But, by God, somebody took that book and I'm going to—"

"Why?" I asked.

"Why what?"

"Why'd it have to be there for somebody to take?"

Guild scratched his chin. "Just what do you mean by that?"

"He didn't meet Macaulay at the Plaza the day of the mur-

der, he didn't commit suicide in Allentown, he says he only got a thousand from Julia Wolf when we thought he was getting five thousand, he says they were just friends when we think they were lovers, he disappoints us too much for me to have much confidence in what he says."

"It's a fact," Guild said, "that I'd understand it better if he'd either come in or run away. Him hanging around like this, just messing things up, don't fit in anywheres that I can see."

"Are you watching his shop?"

"We're kind of keeping an eye on it. Why?"

"I don't know," I said truthfully, "except that he's pointed his finger at a lot of things that got us nowhere. Maybe we ought to pay some attention to the things he hasn't pointed at, and the shop's one of them."

Guild said: "Hm-m-m."

I said, "I'll leave you with that bright thought," and put on my hat and coat. "Suppose I wanted to get hold of you late at night, how would I reach you?"

He gave me his telephone number, we shook hands, and I left.

Gilbert Wynant was waiting for me in the corridor. Neither of us said anything until we were in a taxicab. Then he asked: "He thinks I was telling the truth, doesn't he?"

"Sure. Weren't you?"

"Oh, yes, but people don't always believe you. You won't say anything to Mamma about this, will you?"

"Not if you don't want me to."

"Thank you," he said. "In your opinion, is there more opportunity for a young man out West than here in the East?"

I thought of him working on Guild's fox farm while I replied: "Not now. Thinking of going west?"

"I don't know. I want to do something." He fidgeted with his necktie. "You'll think it's a funny question: is there much incest?"

"There's some," I told him; "that's why they've got a name for it."

His face flushed.

I said: "I'm not making fun of you. It's one of the things nobody knows. There's no way of finding out."

We had a couple of blocks of silence after that. Then he said: "There's another funny question I'd like to ask you: what do you think of me?" He was more self-conscious about it than Alice Quinn had been.

"You're all right," I told him, "and you're all wrong."

He looked away, out the window. "I'm so awfully young."

We had some more silence. Then he coughed and a little blood trickled from one corner of his mouth.

"That guy did hurt you," I said.

He nodded shamefacedly and put his handkerchief to his mouth. "I'm not very strong."

At the Courtland he would not let me help him out of the taxicab and he insisted he could manage alone, but I went upstairs with him, suspecting that otherwise he would say nothing to anybody about his condition.

I rang the apartment bell before he could get his key out, and Mimi opened the door. She goggled at his black eye.

I said: "He's hurt. Get him to bed and get him a doctor."

"What happened?"

"Wynant sent him into something."

"Into what?"

"Never mind that until we get him fixed up."

"But Clyde was here," she said. "That's why I phoned you."

"What?"

"He was." She nodded vigorously. "And he asked where Gil was. He was here for an hour or more. He hasn't been gone ten minutes."

"All right, let's get him to bed."

Gilbert stubbornly insisted that he needed no help, so I left him in the bedroom with his mother and went out to the telephone.

"Any calls?" I asked Nora when I had her on the line.

"Yes, sir. Messrs. Macaulay and Guild want you to phone them, and Mesdames Jorgensen and Quinn want you to phone them. No children so far."

"When did Guild call?"

"About five minutes ago. Mind eating alone? Larry asked me to go see the new Osgood Perkins show with him."

"Go ahead. See you later."

I called up Herbert Macaulay.

"The date's off," he told me. "I heard from our friend and he's up to God knows what. Listen, Charles, I'm going to the police. I've had enough of it."

"I guess there's nothing else to do now," I said. "I was thinking about telephoning some policemen myself. I'm at Mimi's. He was here a few minutes ago. I just missed him."

"What was he doing there?"

"I'm going to try to find out now."

"Were you serious about phoning the police?"

"Sure."

"Then suppose you do that and I'll come on over."

"Right. Be seeing you."

I called up Guild.

"A little news came in right after you left," he said. "Are you where I can give it to you?"

"I'm at Mrs. Jorgensen's. I had to bring the kid home. That red-head lad of yours has got him bleeding somewhere inside."

"I'll kill that mugg," he snarled. "Then I better not talk."

"I've got some news, too. Wynant was here for about an hour this afternoon, according to Mrs. Jorgensen, and left only a few minutes before I got here."

There was a moment of silence, then he said: "Hold everything. I'll be right up."

Mimi came into the living-room while I was looking up the Quinns' telephone number. "Do you think he's seriously hurt?" she asked.

"I don't know, but you ought to get your doctor right away." I pushed the telephone towards her. When she was through with it, I said: "I told the police Wynant had been here."

She nodded. "That's what I phoned you for, to ask if I ought to tell them."

"I phoned Macaulay, too. He's coming over."

"He can't do anything," she said indignantly. "Clyde gave them to me of his own free will—they're mine."

"What's yours?"

"Those bonds, the money."

"What bonds? what money?"

She went to the table and pulled the drawer out. "See?"

Inside were three packages of bonds held together by thick rubber bands. Across the top of them lay a pink check on the Park Avenue Trust Company to the order of Mimi Jorgensen for ten thousand dollars, signed Clyde Miller Wynant, and dated January 3, 1933.

"Dated five days ahead," I said. "What kind of nonsense is that?"

"He said he hadn't that much in his account and might not be able to make a deposit for a couple of days."

"There's going to be hell about this," I warned her. "I hope you're ready for it."

"I don't see why," she protested. "I don't see why my husband—my former husband—can't provide for me and his children if he wants to."

"Cut it out. What'd you sell him?"

"Sell him?"

"Uh-huh. What'd you promise to do in the next few days or he fixes it so the check's no good?"

She made an impatient face. "Really, Nick, I think you're a half-wit sometimes with your silly suspicions."

"I'm studying to be one. Three more lessons and I get my diploma. But remember I warned you yesterday that you'll probably wind up in—"

"Stop it," she cried. She put a hand over my mouth. "Do you have to keep saying that? You know it terrifies me and—" Her voice became soft and wheedling. "You must know what I'm going through these days, Nick. Can't you be a little kinder?"

"Don't worry about me," I said. "Worry about the police." I went back to the telephone and called up Alice Quinn. "This is Nick. Nora said you—"

"Yes. Have you seen Harrison?"

"Not since I left him with you."

"Well, if you do, you won't say anything about what I said last night, will you? I didn't mean it, really I didn't mean a word of it."

"I didn't think you did," I assured her, "and I wouldn't say anything about it anyway. How's he feeling today?"

"He's gone," she said.

"What?"

"He's gone. He's left me."

"He's done that before. He'll be back."

"I know, but I'm afraid this time. He didn't go to his office. I hope he's just drunk somewhere and—but this time I'm afraid. Nick, do you think he's really in love with that girl?"

"He seems to think he is."

"Did he tell you he was?"

"That wouldn't mean anything."

"Do you think it would do any good to have a talk with her?"

"No."

"Why don't you? Do you think she's in love with him?"

"No."

"What's the matter with you?" she asked irritably.

"No, I'm not home."

"What? Oh, you mean you're some place where you can't talk?"

"That's it."

"Are you—are you at her house?"

"Yes."

"Is she there?"

"No."

"Do you think she's with him?"

"I don't know. I don't think so."

"Will you call me when you can talk, or, better still, will you come up to see me?"

"Sure," I promised, and we hung up.

Mimi was looking at me with amusement in her blue eyes.



"Somebody's taking my brat's affairs seriously?" When I did not answer her, she laughed and asked: "Is Dorry still being the maiden in distress?"

"I suppose so."

"She will be, too, as long as she can get anybody to believe in it. And you, of all people, to be fooled, you who are afraid to believe that—well—that I, for instance, am ever telling the truth."

"That's a thought," I said. The doorbell rang before I could go on.

Mimi let the doctor in—he was a roly-poly elderly man with a stoop and a waddle—and took him in to Gilbert.

I opened the table-drawer again and looked at the bonds, Postal Telegraph & Cable 5s, Sao Paulo City 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>s, American Type Founders 6s, Certain-teed Products 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>s, Upper Austria 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>s, United Drugs 5s, Philippine Railway 4s, Tokio Electric Lighting 6s, about sixty thousand dollars at face value, I judged, and—guessing—between a quarter and a third of that at the market.

When the doorbell rang I shut the drawer and let Macaulay in.

He looked tired. He sat down without taking off his overcoat and said: "Well, tell me the worst. What was he up to here?"

"I don't know yet, except that he gave Mimi some bonds and a check."

"I know that." He fumbled in his pocket and gave me a letter:

*Dear Herbert:*

*I am today giving Mrs. Mimi Jorgensen the securities listed below and a ten thousand dollar check on the Park Ave. Trust dated Jan. 3. Please arrange to have sufficient money there on that date to cover it. I would suggest that you sell some more of the public utility bonds, but use your own judgment. I find that I cannot spend any more time in New York at present and probably will not be able to get back here for several months, but will commu-*

*nicate with you from time to time. I am sorry I will not be able to wait over to see you and Charles tonight.*

*Yours truly,*

*Clyde Miller Wynant*

Under the sprawling signature was a list of the bonds.

"How'd it come to you?" I asked.

"By messenger. What do you suppose he was paying her for?"

I shook my head. "I tried to find out. She said he was 'providing for her and his children.'"

"That's likely, as likely as that she'd tell the truth."

"About these bonds?" I asked. "I thought you had all his property in your hands."

"I thought so too, but I didn't have these, didn't know he had them." He put his elbows on his knees, his head in his hands. "If all the things I don't know were laid end to end. . . ."

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Mimi came in with the doctor, said, "Oh, how do you do," a little stiffly to Macaulay, and shook hands with him. "This is Doctor Grant, Mr. Macaulay, Mr. Charles."

"How's the patient?" I asked.

Doctor Grant cleared his throat and said he didn't think there was anything seriously the matter with Gilbert, effects of a beating, slight hemorrhage of course, should rest, though. He cleared his throat again and said he was happy to have met us, and Mimi showed him out.

"What happened to the boy?" Macaulay asked me.

"Wynant sent him on a wild-geese chase over to Julia's apartment and he ran into a tough copper."

Mimi returned from the door. "Has Mr. Charles told you about the bonds and the check?" she asked.

"I had a note from Mr. Wynant saying he was giving them to you," Macaulay said.

"Then there will be no—"

"Difficulty? Not that I know of."

She relaxed a little and her eyes lost some of their coldness.

"I didn't see why there should be, but he"—pointing at me—"likes to frighten me."

Macaulay smiled politely. "May I ask whether Mr. Wynant said anything about his plans?"

"He said something about going away, but I don't suppose I was listening very attentively. I don't remember whether he told me when he was going or where."

I grunted to show skepticism; Macaulay pretended he believed her. "Did he say anything that you could repeat to me about Julia Wolf, or about his difficulties, or about anything connected with the murder and all?" he asked.

She shook her head emphatically. "Not a word I could either repeat or couldn't, not a word at all. I asked him about it, but you know how unsatisfactory he can be when he wants. I couldn't get as much as a grunt out of him about it."

I asked the question Macaulay seemed too polite to ask: "What did he talk about?"

"Nothing, really, except ourselves and the children, particularly Gil. He was very anxious to see him and waited nearly an hour, hoping he'd come home. He asked about Dorry, but didn't seem very interested."

"Did he say anything about having written Gilbert?"

"Not a word. I can repeat our whole conversation, if you want me to. I didn't know he was coming, he didn't even phone from downstairs. The doorbell just rang and when I went to the door there he was, looking a lot older than when I'd seen him last and even thinner, and I said, 'Why Clyde!' or something like that, and he said: 'Are you alone?' I told him I was and he came in. Then he—"

The doorbell rang and she went to answer it.

"What do you think of it?" Macaulay asked in a low voice.

"When I start believing Mimi," I said, "I hope I have sense enough not to admit it."

She returned from the door with Guild and Andy. Guild nodded to me and shook hands with Macaulay, then turned to Mimi and said: "Well, ma'am, I'll have to ask you to tell—"

Macaulay interrupted him: "Suppose you let me tell what I

have to tell first, Lieutenant. It belongs ahead of Mrs. Jorgensen's story and--"

Guild waved a big hand at the lawyer. "Go ahead." He sat down on an end of the sofa.

Macaulay told him what he had told me that morning. When he mentioned having told it to me that morning Guild glanced bitterly at me, once, and thereafter ignored me completely. Guild did not interrupt Macaulay, who told his story clearly and concisely. Twice Mimi started to say something, but each time broke off to listen. When Macaulay had finished, he handed Guild the note about the bonds and check. "That came by messenger this afternoon."

Guild read the note very carefully and addressed Mimi: "Now then, Mrs. Jorgensen."

She told him what she had told us about Wynant's visit, elaborating the details as he patiently questioned her, but sticking to her story that he had refused to say a word about anything connected with Julia Wolf or her murder, that in giving her the bonds and check he had simply said that he wished to provide for her and the children, and that though he had said he was going away she did not know where or when. She seemed not at all disturbed by everybody's obvious disbelief. She wound up smiling, saying: "He's a sweet man in a lot of ways, but quite mad."

"You mean he's really insane, do you?" Guild asked; "not just nutty?"

"Yes."

"What makes you think that?"

"Oh, you'd have to live with him to really know how mad he is," she replied airily.

Guild seemed dissatisfied. "What kind of clothes was he wearing?"

"A brown suit and brown overcoat and hat and I think brown shoes and a white shirt and a grayish necktie with either red or reddish brown figures in it."

Guild jerked his head at Andy. "Tell 'em."

Andy went out.

Guild scratched his jaw and frowned thoughtfully. The rest of us watched him. When he stopped scratching, he looked at Mimi and Macaulay, but not at me, and asked: "Any of you know anybody that's got the initials of D. W. Q.?"

Macaulay shook his head from side to side slowly.

Mimi said: "No. Why?"

Guild looked at me now. "Well?"

"I don't know them."

"Why?" Mimi repeated.

Guild said: "Try to remember back. He'd most likely've had dealings with Wynant."

"How far back?" Macaulay asked.

"That's hard to say right now. Maybe a few months, maybe a few years. He'd be a pretty large man, big bones, big belly, and maybe lame."

Macaulay shook his head again. "I don't remember anybody like that."

"Neither do I," Mimi said, "but I'm bursting with curiosity. I wish you'd tell us what it's all about."

"Sure, I'll tell you." Guild took a cigar from his vest pocket, looked at it, and returned it to the pocket. "A dead man like that's buried under the floor of Wynant's shop."

I said: "Ah."

Mimi put both hands to her mouth and said nothing. Her eyes were round and glassy.

Macaulay, frowning, asked: "Are you sure?"

Guild sighed. "Now you know that ain't something anybody would guess at," he said wearily.

Macaulay's face flushed and he smiled sheepishly. "That was a silly question. How did you happen to find him—it?"

"Well, Mr. Charles here kept hinting that we ought to pay more attention to that shop, so, figuring that Mr. Charles here is a man that's liable to know a lot more things than he tells anybody right out, I sent some men around this morning to see what they could find. We'd give it the once over before and hadn't turned up nothing, but this time I told 'em to take the dump apart, because Mr. Charles here had said we ought to pay

more attention to it. And Mr. Charles here was right." He looked at me with cool unfriendliness. "By and by they found a corner of the cement floor looking a little newer maybe than the rest and they cracked it and there was the mortal remains of Mr. D. W. Q. What do you think of that?"

Macaulay said: "I think it was a damned good guess of Charles's." He turned to me. "How did you—"

Guild interrupted him. "I don't think you ought to say that. When you call it just a guess, you ain't giving Mr. Charles here the proper credit for being as smart as he is."

Macaulay was puzzled by Guild's tone. He looked questioningly at me.

"I'm being stood in the corner for not telling Lieutenant Guild about our conversation this morning," I explained.

"There's that," Guild agreed calmly, "among other things."

Mimi laughed, and smiled apologetically at Guild when he stared at her.

"How was Mr. D. W. Q. killed?" I asked.

Guild hesitated, as if making up his mind whether to reply, then moved his big shoulders slightly and said: "I don't know yet, or how long ago. I haven't seen the remains yet, what there is of them, and the Medical Examiner wasn't through the last I heard."

"What there is of them?" Macaulay repeated.

"Uh-huh. He'd been sawed up in pieces and buried in lime or something so there wasn't much flesh left on him, according to the report I got, but his clothes had been stuck in with him rolled up in a bundle, and enough was left of the inside ones to tell us something. There was part of a cane, too, with a rubber tip. That's why we thought he might be lame, and we—" He broke off as Andy came in. "Well?"

Andy shook his head gloomily. "Nobody sees him come, nobody sees him go. What was that joke about a guy being so thin he had to stand in the same place twice to throw a shadow?"

I laughed—not at the joke—and said: "Wynant's not that thin, but he's thin enough, say as thin as the paper in that check and in those letters people have been getting."

"What's that?" Guild demanded, his face reddening, his eyes angry and suspicious.

"He's dead. He's been dead a long time except on paper. I'll give you even money they're his bones in the grave with the fat lame man's clothes."

Macaulay leaned towards me. "Are you sure of that, Charles?"

Guild snarled at me: "What are you trying to pull?"

"There's the bet if you want it. Who'd go to all that trouble with a corpse and then leave the easiest thing of all to get rid of—the clothes—untouched unless they—"

"But they weren't untouched. They—"

"Of course not. That wouldn't look right. They'd have to be partly destroyed, only enough left to tell you what they were supposed to tell. I bet the initials were plenty conspicuous."

"I don't know," Guild said with less heat. "They were on a belt buckle."

I laughed.

Mimi said angrily: "That's ridiculous, Nick. How could that be Clyde? You know he was here this afternoon. You know he—"

"Sh-h-h. It's very silly of you to play along with him," I told her. "Wynant's dead, your children are probably his heirs, that's more money than you've got over there in the drawer. What do you want to take part of the loot for when you can get it all?"

"I don't know what you mean," she said. She was very pale.

Macaulay said: "Charles thinks Wynant wasn't here this afternoon and that you were given those securities and the check by somebody else, or perhaps stole them yourself. Is that it?" he asked me.

"Practically."

"But that's ridiculous," she insisted.

"Be sensible, Mimi," I said. "Suppose Wynant was killed three months ago and his corpse disguised as somebody else. He's supposed to have gone away leaving powers of attorney with Macaulay. All right, then, the estate's completely in

Macaulay's hands for ever and ever, or at least until he finishes plundering it, because you can't even--"

Macaulay stood up saying: "I don't know what you're getting at, Charles, but I'm--"

"Take it easy," Guild told him. "Let him have his say out."

"He killed Wynant and he killed Julia and he killed Nunheim," I assured Mimi. What do you want to do? Be next on the list? You ought to know damned well that once you've come to his aid by saying you've seen Wynant alive--because that's his weak spot, being the only person up to now who claims to have seen Wynant since October--he's not going to take any chances on having you change your mind--not when it's only a matter of knocking you off with the same gun and putting the blame on Wynant. And what are you doing it for? For those few crummy bonds in the drawer, a fraction of what you get your hands on through your children if we prove Wynant's dead."

Mimi turned to Macaulay and said: "You son of a bitch."

Guild gaped at her, more surprised by that than by anything else that had been said.

Macaulay started to move. I did not wait to see what he meant to do, but slammed his chin with my left fist. The punch was all right, it landed solidly and dropped him, but I felt a burning sensation on my left side and knew I had torn the bullet-wound open.

"What do you want me to do?" I growled at Guild. "Put him in Cellophane for you?"

31

It was nearly three in the morning when I let myself into our apartment at the Normandie. Nora, Dorothy, and Larry Crowley were in the living-room, Nora and Larry playing backgammon, Dorothy reading a newspaper.

"Did Macaulay really kill them?" Nora asked immediately.

"Yes. Did the morning papers have anything about Wynant?"

Dorothy said: "No, just about Macaulay being arrested. Why?"



"Macaulay killed him too."

Nora said, "Really?" Larry said, "I'll be damned." Dorothy began to cry. Nora looked at Dorothy in surprise.

Dorothy sobbed: "I want to go home to Mamma."

Larry said not very eagerly: "I'll be glad to take you home if..."

Dorothy said she wanted to go. Nora fussed over her, but did not try to talk her out of going. Larry, trying not to look too unwilling, found his hat and coat. He and Dorothy left.

Nora shut the door behind them and leaned against it. "Explain that to me, Mr. Charalambides," she said.

I shook my head.

She sat on the sofa beside me. "Now out with it. If you skip a single word, I'll--"

"I'd have to have a drink before I could do any talking."

She cursed me and brought me a drink. "Has he confessed?"

"Why should he? You can't plead guilty of murder in the first degree. There were too many murders--and at least two of them were too obviously done in cold blood--for the District Attorney to let him plead guilty of second-degree murder. There's nothing for him to do but fight it out."

"But he did commit them?"

"Sure."

She pushed my glass down from my mouth. "Stop stalling and tell me about it."

"Well, it figures out that he and Julia had been gypping Wynant for some time. He'd dropped a lot of money in the market and he'd found out about her past--as Morelli hinted--and the pair of them teamed up on the old man. We're sicking accountants on Macaulay's books and Wynant's and shouldn't have much trouble tracing some of the loot from one to the other."

"Then you don't know positively that he was robbing Wynant?"

"Sure we know. It doesn't click any other way. The chances are Wynant was going away on a trip the 3rd of October, because he did draw five thousand dollars out of the bank in

cash, but he didn't close up his shop and give up his apartment. That was done by Macaulay a few days later. Wynant was killed at Macaulay's in Scarsdale on the night of the 3rd. We know that because on the morning of the 4th, when Macaulay's cook, who slept at home, came to work, Macaulay met her at the door with some kind of trumped-up complaint and two weeks' wages and fired her on the spot, not letting her in the house to find any corpses or blood-stains."

"How did you find that out? Don't skip details."

"Ordinary routine. Naturally after we grabbed him we went to his office and house to see what we could find out—you know, where-were-you-on-the-night-of-June-6, 1894-stuff—and the present cook said she'd only been working for him since the 8th of October, and that led to that. We also found a table with a very faint trace of what we hope is human blood not quite scrubbed out. The scientific boys are making shavings of it now to see if they can soak out any results for us." (It turned out to be beef blood.)

"Then you're not sure he—"

"Stop saying that. Of course we're sure. That's the only way it clicks. Wynant had found out that Julia and Macaulay were gypping him and also thought, rightly or wrongly, that Julia and Macaulay were cheating on him—and we know he was jealous—so he went up there to confront him with whatever proof he had, and Macaulay, with prison looking him in the face, killed the old man. Now don't say we're not sure. It doesn't make any sense otherwise. Well, there he is with a corpse, one of the harder things to get rid of. Can I stop to take a swallow of whisky?"

"Just one," Nora said. "But this is just a theory, isn't it?"

"Call it any name you like. It's good enough for me."

"But I thought everybody was supposed to be considered innocent until they were proved guilty and if there was any reasonable doubt, they—"

"That's for juries, not detectives. You find the guy you think did the murder and you slam him in the can and let everybody know you think he's guilty and put his picture all over news-

papers, and the District Attorney builds up the best theory he can on what information you've got and meanwhile you pick up additional details here and there, and people who recognize his picture in the paper—as well as people who'd think he was innocent if you hadn't arrested him—come in and tell you things about him and presently you've got him sitting on the electric chair." (Two days later a woman in Brooklyn identified Macaulay as a George Foley who for the past three months had been renting an apartment from her.)

"But that seems so loose."

"When murders are committed by mathematics," I said, "you can solve them by mathematics. Most of them aren't and this one wasn't. I don't want to go against your idea of what's right and wrong, but when I say he probably dissected the body so he could carry it into town in bags I'm only saying what seems most probable. That would be on the 6th of October or later, because it wasn't until then that he laid off the two mechanics Wynant had working in the shop—Prentice and McNaughton—and shut it up. So he buried Wynant under the floor, buried him with a fat man's clothes and a lame man's stick and a belt marked D. W. Q., all arranged so they wouldn't get too much of the lime—or whatever he used to eat off the dead man's features and flesh—on them, and he re-cemented the floor over the grave. Between police routine and publicity we've got more than a fair chance of finding out where he bought or otherwise got the clothes and stick and the cement." (We traced the cement to him later—he had bought it from a coal and wood dealer uptown—but had no luck with the other things.)

"I hope so," she said, not too hopefully.

"So now that's taken care of. By renewing the lease on the shop and keeping it vacant—supposedly waiting for Wynant to return—he can make sure—reasonably sure—that nobody will discover the grave, and if it is accidentally discovered, then fat Mr. D. W. Q. — by that time Wynant's bones would be pretty bare and you can't tell whether a man was thin or fat by his skeleton—was murdered by Wynant, which explains why Wynant has made himself scarce. That taken care of, Macaulay forges

the power of attorney and, with Julia's help, settles down to the business of gradually transferring the late Clyde's money to themselves. Now I'm going theoretical again. Julia doesn't like murder, and she's frightened, and he's not too sure she won't weaken on him. That's why he makes her break with Morelli—giving Wynant's jealousy as an excuse. He's afraid she might confide to Morelli in a weak moment and, as the time draws near for her still closer friend, Face Pepler, to get out of prison, he gets more and more worried. He's been safe there as long as Face stayed in, because she's not likely to put anything dangerous in a letter that has to pass through the warden's hands, but now . . . Well, he starts to plan, and then all hell breaks loose. Mimi and her children arrive and start hunting for Wynant and I come to town and am in touch with them and he thinks I'm helping them. He decides to play safe on Julia by putting her out of the way. Like it so far?"

"Yes, but . . ."

"It gets worse as it goes along," I assured her. "On his way here for lunch that day he stops and phones his office, pretending he's Wynant, and making that appointment at the Plaza, the idea being to establish Wynant's presence in town. When he leaves here he goes to the Plaza and asks people if they've seen Wynant, to make that plausible, and for the same reason phones his office to ask if any further word has come from Wynant, and phones Julia. She tells him she's expecting Mimi and she tells him Mimi thought she was lying when she said she didn't know where Wynant was, and Julia probably sounds pretty frightened. So he decides he's got to beat Mimi to the interview and he does. He beats it over there and kills her. He's a terrible shot. I saw him shoot during the war. It's likely he missed her with the first shot, the one that hit the telephone, and didn't succeed in killing her right away with the other four, but he probably thought she was dead, and, anyhow, he had to get out before Mimi arrived, so he dropped the piece of Wynant's chain that he had brought along as a clincher—and his having saved that for three months makes it look as if he'd intended killing her from the beginning—and scoots over to the

engineer Hermann's office, where he takes advantage of the breaks and fixes himself up with an alibi. The two things he doesn't expect—couldn't very well have foreseen—are that Nunheim, hanging around trying to get at the girl, had seen him leave her apartment—may even have heard the shots—and that Mimi, with blackmail in her heart, was going to conceal the chain for use in shaking down her ex-husband. That's why he had to go down to Philadelphia and send me that wire and the letter to himself and one to Aunt Alice later—if Mimi thinks Wynant's throwing suspicion on her she'll get mad enough to give the police the evidence she's got against him. Her desire to hurt Jorgensen nearly gummed that up, though. Macaulay, by the way, knew Jorgensen was Kelterman. Right after he killed Wynant he had detectives look Mimi and her family up in Europe—their interest in the estate made them potentially dangerous—and the detectives found out who Jorgensen was. We found the reports in Macaulay's files. He pretended he was getting the information for Wynant, of course. Then he started worrying about me, about my not thinking Wynant guilty and—"

"And why didn't you?"

"Why should he write letters antagonizing Mimi, the one who was helping him by holding back incriminating evidence? That's why I thought the chain had been planted when she did turn it in, only I was a little bit too willing to believe she had done the planting. Morelli worried Macaulay, too, because he didn't want suspicion thrown on anybody who might, in clearing themselves, throw it in the wrong direction. Mimi was all right, because she'd throw it back on Wynant, but everybody else was out. Suspicion thrown on Wynant was the one thing that was guaranteed to keep anybody from suspecting that Wynant was dead, and if Macaulay hadn't killed Wynant, then there was no reason for his having killed either of the others. The most obvious thing in the whole lay-out and the key to the whole lay-out was that Wynant had to be dead."

"You mean you thought that from the beginning?" Nora demanded, fixing me with a stern eye.

"No, darling, though I ought to be ashamed of myself for not seeing it, but once I heard there was a corpse under the floor, I wouldn't have cared if doctors swore it was a woman's, I'd have insisted it was Wynant's. It had to be. It was the one right thing."

"I guess you're awfully tired. That must be what makes you talk like this."

"Then he had Nunheim to worry about too. After pointing the finger at Morelli, just to show the police he was being useful, he went to see Macaulay. I'm guessing again, sweetheart. I had a phone-call from a man who called himself Albert Norman, and the conversation ended with a noise on his end of the wire. My guess is that Nunheim went to see Macaulay and demanded some dough to keep quiet and, when Macaulay tried to bluff him, Nunheim said he'd show him and called me up to make a date with me to see if I'd buy his information—and Macaulay grabbed the phone and gave Nunheim something, if only a promise, but when Guild and I had our little talk with Nunheim, and he ran out on us, then he phoned Macaulay and demanded real action, probably a lump sum, with a promise to beat it out of town, away from us meddling sleuths. We do know he called up that afternoon—Macaulay's telephone-operator remembers a Mr. Albert Norman calling up, and she remembers that Macaulay went out right after talking to him, so don't get snooty about this—uh—reconstruction of mine. Macaulay wasn't silly enough to think Nunheim was to be trusted even if he paid him, so he lured him down to this spot he had probably picked out ahead of time and let him have it—and that took care of that."

"Probably," Nora said.

"It's a word you've got to use a lot in this business. The letter to Gilbert was only for the purpose of showing that Wynant had a key to the girl's apartment, and sending Gilbert there was only a way of making sure that he'd fall into the hands of the police, who'd squeeze him and not let him keep the information about the letter and the key to himself. Then Mimi finally comes through with the watch-chain, but meanwhile

another worry comes up. She's persuaded Guild to suspect me a little. I've an idea that when Macaulay came to me this morning with the hoey he intended to get me up to Scarsdale and knock me off, making me number three on the list of Wynant's victims. Maybe he just changed his mind, maybe he thought I was suspicious, too willing to go up there without policemen. Anyhow, Gilbert's lie about having seen Wynant gave him another idea. If he could get somebody to say they had seen Wynant and stick to it. . . Now this part we know definitely."

"Thank God."

"He went to see Mimi this afternoon—riding up two floors above hers and walking down so the elevator boys wouldn't remember having carried him to her floor—and made her a proposition. He told her there was no question about Wynant's guilt, but that it was doubtful if the police would ever catch him. Meanwhile he, Macaulay, had the whole estate in his hands. He couldn't take a chance on appropriating any of it, but he'd fix it so she could—if she would split with him. He'd give her these bonds he had in his pocket and this check, but she'd have to say that Wynant had given them to her and she'd have to send this note, which he also had, over to Macaulay as if from Wynant. He assured her that Wynant, a fugitive, could not show up to deny his gift, and, except for herself and her children, there was no one else who had any interest in the estate, any reason for questioning the deal. Mimi's not very sensible where she sees a chance to make a profit, so it was all O. K. with her, and he had what he wanted—somebody who'd seen Wynant alive. He warned her that everybody would think Wynant was paying her for some service, but if she simply denied it there would be nothing anybody could prove."

"Then what he told you this morning about Wynant instructing him to give her any amount she asked for was simply in preparation?"

"Maybe, maybe it was an earlier fumbling towards that idea. Now are you satisfied with what we've got on him?"

"Yes, in a way. There seems to be enough of it, but it's not very neat."

"It's neat enough to send him to the chair," I said, "and that's all that counts. It takes care of all the angles and I can't think of any other theory that would. Naturally it wouldn't hurt to find the pistol, and the typewriter he used for the Wynant letters, and they must be somewhere around where he can get at them when he needs them." (We found them in the Brooklyn apartment he had rented as George Foley.)

"Have it your own way," she said, "but I always thought detectives waited until they had every little detail fixed in—"

"And then wonder why the suspect's had time to get to the farthest country that has no extradition treaty."

She laughed. "All right, all right. Still want to leave for San Francisco tomorrow?"

"Not unless you're in a hurry. Let's stick around awhile. This excitement has put us behind in our drinking."

"It's all right by me. What do you think will happen to Mimi and Dorothy and Gilbert now?"

"Nothing new. They'll go on being Mimi and Dorothy and Gilbert just as you and I will go on being us and the Quinns will go on being the Quinns. Murder doesn't round out anybody's life except the murdered's and sometimes the murderer's."

"That may be," Nora said, "but it's all pretty unsatisfactory."



# STORIES



## Fly Paper

It was a wandering daughter job.

The Hambletons had been for several generations a wealthy and decently prominent New York family. There was nothing in the Hambleton history to account for Sue, the youngest member of the clan. She grew out of childhood with a kink that made her dislike the polished side of life, like the rough. By the time she was twenty-one, in 1926, she definitely preferred Tenth Avenue to Fifth, grifters to bankers, and Hymie the Riveter to the Honorable Cecil Windown, who had asked her to marry him.

The Hambletons tried to make Sue behave, but it was too late for that. She was legally of age. When she finally told them to go to hell and walked out on them there wasn't much they could do about it. Her father, Major Waldo Hambleton, had given up all the hopes he ever had of salvaging her, but he didn't want her to run into any grief that could be avoided. So he came into the Continental Detective Agency's New York office and asked to have an eye kept on her.

Hymie the Riveter was a Philadelphia racketeer who had moved north to the big city, carrying a Thompson submachine gun wrapped in blue-checkered oil cloth, after a disagreement with his partners. New York wasn't so good a field as Philadelphia for machine gun work.

The Thompson lay idle for a year or so while Hymie made expenses with an automatic, preying on small-time crap games in Harlem.

Three or four months after Sue went to live with Hymie he made what looked like a promising connexion with the first of the crew that came into New York from Chicago to organize the city on the western scale. But the boys from Chi didn't want Hymie; they wanted the Thompson. When he showed it to them, as the big item in his application for employment, they shot holes in the top of Hymie's head and went away with the gun.

Sue Hambleton buried Hymie, had a couple of lonely weeks in which she hocked a ring to eat, and then got a job as hostess in a speakeasy run by a Greek named Vassos.

One of Vassos' customers was Babe McCloor, two hundred and fifty pounds of hard Scotch-Irish-Indian bone and muscle, a black-haired, blue-eyed, swarthy giant who was resting up after doing a fifteen-year hitch in Leavenworth for ruining most of the smaller post offices between New Orleans and Omaha. Babe was keeping himself in drinking money while he rested by playing with pedestrians in dark streets.

Babe liked Sue. Vassos liked Sue. Sue liked Babe. Vassos didn't like that. Jealousy spoiled the Greek's judgment. He kept the speakeasy door locked one night when Babe wanted to come in. Babe came in, bringing pieces of the door with him. Vassos got his gun out, but couldn't shake Sue off his arm. He stopped trying when Babe hit him with the part of the door that had the brass knob on it. Babe and Sue went away from Vassos' together.

Up to that time the New York office had managed to keep in touch with Sue. She hadn't been kept under constant surveillance. Her father hadn't wanted that. It was simply a matter of sending a man around every week or so to see that she was still alive, to pick up whatever information he could from her friends and neighbors, without, of course, letting her know she was being tabbed. All that had been easy enough, but when she and Babe went away after wrecking the gin mill, they dropped completely out of sight.

After turning the city upside-down, the New York office sent a journal on the job to the other Continental branches throughout the country, giving the information above and enclosing photographs and descriptions of Sue and her new playmate. That was late in 1927.

We had enough copies of the photographs to go around, and for the next month or so whoever had a little idle time on his hands spent it looking through San Francisco and Oakland for the missing pair. We didn't find them. Operatives in other cities, doing the same thing, had the same luck.

Then, nearly a year later, a telegram came to us from the New York office. Decoded, it read:

Major Hambleton today received telegram from daughter in San Francisco quote Please wire me thousand dollars care apartment two hundred six number six hundred one Eddis Street stop I will come home if you will let me stop Please tell me if I can come but please please wire money anyway unquote Hambleton authorizes payment of money to her immediately stop Detail competent operative to call on her with money and to arrange for her return home stop If possible have man and woman operative accompany her here stop Hambleton wiring her stop Report immediately by wire.

The Old Man gave me the telegram and a check, saying, "You know the situation. You'll know how to handle it."

I pretended I agreed with him, went down to the bank, swapped the check for a bundle of bills of several sizes, caught a streetcar, and went up to 601 Eddis Street, a fairly large apartment building on the corner of Larkin.

The name on Apartment 206's vestibule mail box was J. M. Wales.

I pushed 206's button. When the locked door buzzed off I went into the building, past the elevator to the stairs, and up a flight. 206 was just around the corner from the stairs.

The apartment door was opened by a tall, slim man of thirty-

something in neat dark clothes. He had narrow dark eyes set in a long pale face. There was some gray in the dark hair brushed flat to his scalp.

"Miss Hambleton," I said.

"Uh—what about her?" His voice was smooth, but not too smooth to be agreeable.

"I'd like to see her."

His upper eyelids came down a little and the brows over them came a little closer together. He asked, "Is it—?" and stopped, watching me steadily.

I didn't say anything. Presently he finished his question, "Something to do with a telegram?"

"Yeah."

His long face brightened immediately. He asked, "You're from her father?"

"Yeah."

He stepped back and swung the door wide open, saying, "Come in. Major Hambleton's wire came to her only a few minutes ago. He said someone would call."

We went through a small passageway into a sunny living room that was cheaply furnished, but neat and clean enough.

"Sit down," the man said, pointing at a brown rocking chair.

I sat down. He sat on the burlap-covered sofa facing me. I looked around the room. I didn't see anything to show that a woman was living there.

He rubbed the long bridge of his nose with a longer forefinger and asked slowly, "You brought the money?"

I said I'd feel more like talking with her there.

He looked at the finger with which he had been rubbing his nose, and then up at me, saying softly, "But I'm her friend."

I said, "Yeah?" to that.

"Yes," he repeated. He frowned slightly, drawing back the corners of his thin-lipped mouth. "I've only asked whether you've brought the money."

I didn't say anything.

"The point is," he said quite reasonably, "that if you brought the money she doesn't expect you to hand it over to anybody

except her. If you didn't bring it she doesn't want to see you. I don't think her mind can be changed about that. That's why I asked if you had brought it."

"I brought it."

He looked doubtfully at me. I showed him the money I had got from the bank. He jumped up briskly from the sofa.

"I'll have her here in a minute or two," he said over his shoulder as his long legs moved him toward the door. At the door he stopped to ask, "Do you know her? Or shall I have her bring means of identifying herself?"

"That would be best," I told him.

He went out, leaving the corridor door open.

In five minutes he was back with a slender blonde girl of twenty-three in pale green silk. The looseness of her small mouth and the puffiness around her blue eyes weren't yet pronounced enough to spoil her prettiness.

I stood up.

"This is Miss Hambleton," he said.

She gave me a swift glance and then lowered her eyes again, nervously playing with the strap of a handbag she held.

"You can identify yourself?" I asked.

"Sure," the man said. "Show them to him, Sue."

She opened the bag, brought out some papers and things, and held them up for me to take.

"Sit down, sit down," the man said as I took them.

They sat on the sofa. I sat in the rocking chair again and examined the things she had given me. There were two letters addressed to Sue Hambleton here, her father's telegram welcoming her home, a couple of receipted department store bills, an automobile driver's license, and a savings account pass book that showed a balance of less than ten dollars.

By the time I had finished my examination the girl's embarrassment was gone. She looked levelly at me, as did the man beside her. I felt in my pocket, found my copy of the photograph New York had sent us at the beginning of the hunt, and looked from it to her.

"Your mouth could have shrunk, maybe," I said, "but how could your nose have got that much longer?"

"If you don't like my nose," she said, "how'd you like to go to hell?" Her face had turned red.

"That's not the point. It's a swell nose, but it's not Sue's." I held the photograph out to her. "See for yourself."

She glared at the photograph and then at the man.

"What a smart guy you are," she told him.

He was watching me with dark eyes that had a brittle shine to them between narrow-drawn eyelids. He kept on watching me while he spoke to her out the side of his mouth, crisply. "Pipe down."

She piped down. He sat and watched me. I sat and watched him. A clock ticked seconds away behind me. His eyes began shifting their focus from one of my eyes to the other. The girl sighed.

He said in a low voice, "Well?"

I said, "You're in a hole."

"What can you make out of it?" he asked casually.

"Conspiracy to defraud."

The girl jumped up and hit one of his shoulders angrily with the back of a hand, crying, "What a smart guy you are, to get me in a jam like this. It was going to be duck soup-yeh! Eggs in the coffee-yeh! Now look at you. You haven't even got guts enough to tell this guy to go chase himself." She spun around to face me, pushing her red face down at me—I was still sitting in the rocker—snarling, "Well, what are you waiting for? Waiting to be kissed good-by? We don't owe you anything, do we? We didn't get any of your lousy money, did we? Outside, then. Take the air. Dangle."

"Stop it, sister," I growled. "You'll bust something."

The man said, "For God's sake stop that bawling, Peggy, and give somebody else a chance." He addressed me, "Well, what do you want?"

"How'd you get into this?" I asked.

He spoke quickly, eagerly, "A fellow named Kenny gave me that stuff and told me about this Sue Hambleton, and her old

man having plenty. I thought I'd give it a whirl: I figured the old man would either wire the dough right off the reel or wouldn't send it at all. I didn't figure on this send-a-man stuff. Then when his wire came, saying he was sending a man to see her, I ought to have dropped it.

"But hell! Here was a man coming with a grand in cash. That was too good to let go of without a try. It looked like there still might be a chance of copping, so I got Peggy to do Sue for me. If the man was coming today, it was a cinch he belonged out here on the Coast, and it was an even bet he wouldn't know Sue, would only have a description of her. From what Kenny had told me about her, I knew Peggy would come pretty close to fitting her description. I still don't see how you got that photograph. I only wired the old man yesterday. I mailed a couple of letters to Sue, here, yesterday, so we'd have them with the other identification stuff to get the money from the telegraph company on."

"Kenny gave you the old man's address?"

"Sure he did."

"Did he give you Sue's?"

"No."

"How'd Kenny get hold of the stuff?"

"He didn't say."

"Where's Kenny now?"

"I don't know. He was on his way east, with something else on the fire, and couldn't fool with this. That's why he passed it on to me."

"Big-hearted Kenny," I said, "You know Sue Hambleton?"

"No," emphatically. "I'd never even heard of her till Kenny told me."

"I don't like this Kenny," I said, "though without him your story's got some good points. Could you tell it leaving him out?"

He shook his head slowly from side to side, saying, "It wouldn't be the way it happened."

"That's too bad. Conspiracies to defraud don't mean as much



to me as finding Sue. I might have made a deal with you."

He shook his head again, but his eyes were thoughtful, and his lower lip moved up to overlap the upper a little.

The girl had stepped back so she could see both of us as we talked, turning her face, which showed she didn't like us, from one to the other as we spoke our pieces. Now she fastened her gaze on the man, and her eyes were growing angry again.

I got up on my feet, telling him, "Suit yourself. But if you want to play it that way I'll have to take you both in."

He smiled with indrawn lips and stood up.

The girl thrust herself in between us, facing him.

"This is a swell time to be dummying up," she spit at him. "Pop off, you lightweight, or I will. You're crazy if you think I'm going to take the fall with you."

"Shut up," he said in his throat.

"Shut me up," she cried.

He tried to, with both hands. I reached over her shoulders and caught one of his wrists, knocked the other hand up.

She slid out from between us and ran around behind me, screaming, "Joe does know her. He got the things from her. She's at the St Martin on O'Farrell Street—her and Babe McCloor."

While I listened to this I had to pull my head aside to let Joe's right hook miss me, had got his left arm twisted behind him, had turned my hip to catch his knee, and had got the palm of my left hand under his chin. I was ready to give his chin the Japanese tilt when he stopped wrestling and grunted, "Let me tell it."

"Hop to it," I consented, taking my hands away from him and stepping back.

He rubbed the wrist I had wrenched, scowling past me at the girl. He called her four unlovely names, the mildest of which was "a dumb twist", and told her, "He was bluffing about throwing us in the can. You don't think old man Hambleton's hunting for newspaper space, do you?" That wasn't a bad guess.

He sat on the sofa again, still rubbing his wrist. The girl

stayed on the other side of the room, laughing at him through her teeth.

I said, "All right, roll it out, one of you."

"You've got it all," he muttered. "I glauemed that stuff last week when I was visiting Babe, knowing the story and hating to see a promising layout like that go to waste."

"What's Babe doing now?" I asked.

"I don't know."

"Is he still puffing them?"

"I don't know."

"Like hell you don't."

"I don't," he insisted. "If you know Babe you know you can't get anything out of him about what he's doing."

"How long have he and Sue been here?"

"About six months that I know of."

"Who's he mobbed up with?"

"I don't know. Any time Babe works with a mob he picks them up on the road and leaves them on the road."

"How's he fixed?"

"I don't know. There's always enough grub and liquor in the joint."

Half an hour of this convinced me that I wasn't going to get much information about my people here.

I went to the phone in the passageway and called the Agency. The boy on the switchboard told me MacMan was in the operative's room. I asked to have him sent up to me, and went back to the living room. Joe and Peggy took their heads apart when I came in.

MacMan arrived in less than ten minutes. I let him in and told him, "This fellow says his name's Joe Wales, and the girl's supposed to be Peggy Carroll who lives upstairs in 421. We've got them cold for conspiracy to defraud, but I've made a deal with them. I'm going out to look at it now. Stay here with them, in this room. Nobody goes in or out, and nobody but you gets to the phone. There's a fire escape in front of the window. The window's locked now. I'd keep it that way. If the deal turns out O. K. we'll let them go, but if they cut up on

you while I'm gone there's no reason why you can't knock them around as much as you want."

MacMan nodded his hard round head and pulled a chair out between them and the door. I picked up my hat.

Joe Wales called, "Hey, you're not going to uncover me to Babe, are you? That's got to be part of the deal."

"Not unless I have to."

"I'd just as leave stand the rap," he said. "I'd be safer in jail."

"I'll give you the best break I can," I promise, "but you'll have to take what's dealt you."

Walking over to the St Martin—only half a dozen blocks from Wales's place—I decided to go up against McCloor and the girl as a Continental op who suspected Babe of being in on a branch bank stick-up in Alameda the previous week. He hadn't been in on it—if the bank people had described half-correctly the men who had robbed them—so it wasn't likely my supposed suspicions would brighten him much. Clearing himself, he might give me some information I could use. The chief thing I wanted, of course, was a look at the girl, so I could report to her father that I had seen her. There was no reason for supposing that she and Babe knew her father was trying to keep an eye on her. Babe had a record. It was natural enough for sleuths to drop in now and then and try to hang something on him.

The St Martin was a small three-story apartment house of red brick between two taller hotels. The vestibule register showed, R.K. McCloor, 313, as Wales and Peggy had told me.

I pushed the bell button. Nothing happened. Nothing happened any of the four times I pushed it. I pushed the button labeled *Manager*.

The door clicked open. I went indoors. A beefy woman in a pink-striped cotton dress that needed pressing stood in an apartment doorway just inside the street door.

"Some people named McCloor live here?" I asked.

"Three-thirteen," she said.

**"Been living here long?"**

She pursed her fat mouth, looked intently at me, hesitated, but finally said, "Since last June."

**"What do you know about them?"**

She balked at that, raising her chin and her eyebrows.

I gave her my card. That was safe enough; it fit in with the pretext I intended using upstairs.

Her face, when she raised it from reading the card, was oily with curiosity.

"Come in here," she said in a husky whisper, backing through the doorway.

I followed her into her apartment. We sat on a Chesterfield and she whispered, **"What is it?"**

"Maybe nothing." I kept my voice low, playing up to her theatricals. "He's done time for safe burglary. I'm trying to get a line on him now, on the off chance that he might have been tied up in a recent job. I don't know that he was. He may be going straight for all I know." I took his photograph—front and profile, taken at Leavenworth—out of my pocket. "This him?"

She seized it eagerly, nodded, said, "Yes, that's him, all right," turned it over to read the description on the back, and repeated, "Yes, that's him, all right."

"His wife is here with him?" I asked. She nodded vigorously.

"I don't know her," I said. "What sort of looking girl is she?"

She described a girl who could have been Sue Hambleton. I couldn't show Sue's picture; that would have uncovered me if she and Babe heard about it.

I asked the woman what she knew about the McCloors. What she knew wasn't a great deal: paid their rent on time, kept irregular hours, had occasional drinking parties, quarreled a lot.

"Think they're in now?" I asked. "I got no answer on the bell."

"I don't know," she whispered. "I haven't seen either of them since night before last, when they had a fight."

**"Much of a fight?"**

"Not much worse than usual."

"Could you find out if they're in?" I asked.

She looked at me out of the ends of her eyes.

"I'm not going to make any trouble for you," I assured her. "But if they've blown I'd like to know it, and I reckon you would too."

"All right, I'll find out." She got up, patting a pocket in which keys jingled. "You wait here."

"I'll go as far as the third floor with you," I said, "and wait out of sight there."

"All right," she said reluctantly.

On the third floor, I remained by the elevator. She disappeared around a corner of the dim corridor, and presently a muffled electric bell rang. It rang three times. I heard her keys jingle and one of them grate in a lock. The lock clicked. I heard the doorknob rattle as she turned it.

Then a long moment of silence was ended by a scream that filled the corridor from wall to wall.

I jumped for the corner, swung around it, saw an open door ahead, went through it, and slammed the door shut behind me.

The scream had stopped.

I was in a small dark vestibule with three doors beside the one I had come through. One door was shut. One opened into a bathroom. I went to the other.

The fat manager stood just inside it, her round back to me. I pushed past her and saw what she was looking at.

Sue Hambleton, in pale yellow pajamas trimmed with black lace, was lying across the bed. She lay on her back. Her arms were stretched out over her head. One leg was bent under her, one stretched out so that its bare foot rested on the floor. That bare foot was whiter than a live foot could be. Her face was white as her foot, except for a mottled swollen area from the right eyebrow to the right cheek-bone and dark bruises on her throat.

"Phone the police," I told the woman, and began poking into corners, closets and drawers.

It was late afternoon when I returned to the Agency. I asked

the file clerk to see if we had anything on Joe Wales and Peggy Carroll, and then went into the Old Man's office.

He put down some reports he had been reading, gave me a nodded invitation to sit down, and asked, "You've seen her?"

"Yeah. She's dead."

The Old Man said, "Indeed," as if I had said it was raining, and smiled with polite attentiveness while I told him about it—from the time I had rung Wales's bell until I had joined the fat manager in the dead girl's apartment.

"She had been knocked around some, was bruised on the face and neck," I wound up. "But that didn't kill her."

"You think she was murdered?" he asked, still smiling gently.

"I don't know. Doc Jordan says he thinks it could have been arsenic. He's hunting for it in her now. We found a funny thing in the joint. Some thick sheets of dark gray paper were stuck in a book—*The Count of Monte Cristo*—wrapped in a month-old newspaper and wedged into a dark corner between the stove and the kitchen wall."

"Ah, arsenical fly paper," the Old Man murmured. "The Maybrick-Seddons trick. Mashed in ~~water~~, four to six grains of arsenic can be soaked out of a sheet—enough to kill two people."

I nodded, saying, "I worked on one in Louisville in 1916. The mulatto janitor saw McCloor leaving at half-past nine yesterday morning. She was probably dead before that. Nobody's seen him since. Earlier in the morning the people in the next apartment had heard them talking, her groaning. But they had too many fights for the neighbors to pay much attention to that. The landlady told me they had a fight the night before that. The police are hunting for him."

"Did you tell the police who she was?"

"No. What do we do on that angle? We can't tell them about Wales without telling them all."

"I dare say the whole thing will have to come out," he said thoughtfully. "I'll wire New York."

I went out of his office. The file clerk gave me a couple of

newspaper clippings. The first told me that fifteen months ago Joseph Wales, alias Holy Joe, had been arrested on the complaint of a farmer named Toomey that he had been taken for twenty-five hundred dollars on a phony "business opportunity" by Wales and three other men. The second clipping said the case had been dropped when Toomey failed to appear against Wales in court—bought off in the customary manner by the return of part or all of his money. That was all our files held on Wales, and they had nothing on Peggy Carroll.

MacMan opened the door for me when I returned to Wales's apartment.

"Anything doing?" I asked him.

"Nothing—except they've been belly-aching a lot." Wales came forward, asking eagerly, "Satisfied now?"

The girl stood by the window, looking at me with anxious eyes.

I didn't say anything.

"Did you find her?" Wales asked, frowning. "She was where I told you?"

"Yeah," I said.

"Well, then." Part of his frown went away. "That lets Peggy and me out, doesn't—" He broke off, ran his tongue over his lower lip, put a hand to his chin, asked sharply, "You didn't give them the tip-off on me, did you?"

I shook my head, no.

He took his hand from his chin and asked irritably, "What's the matter with you, then? What are you looking like that for?"

Behind him the girl spoke bitterly. "I knew damned well it would be like this," she said. "I knew damned well we weren't going to get out of it. Oh, what a smart guy you are!"

"Take Peggy into the kitchen, and shut both doors," I told MacMan. "Holy Joe and I are going to have a real heart-to-heart talk."

The girl went out willingly, but when MacMan was closing the door she put her head in again to tell Wales, "I hope he busts you in the nose if you try to hold out on him."

MacMan shut the door,

"Your playmate seems to think you know something," I said.

Wales scowled at the door and grumbled, "She's more help to me than a broken leg." He turned his face to me, trying to make it look frank and friendly. "What do you want? I came clean with you before. What's the matter now?"

"What do you guess?"

He pulled his lips in between his teeth. "What do you want to make me guess for?" he demanded. "I'm willing to play ball with you. But what can I do if you won't tell me what you want? I can't see inside your head."

"You'd get a kick out of it if you could."

He shook his head wearily and walked back to the sofa, sitting down bent forward, his hands together between his knees. "All right," he sighed. "Take your time about asking me. I'll wait for you."

I went over and stood in front of him. I took his chin between my left thumb and fingers, raising his head and bending my own down until our noses were almost touching. I said, "Where you stumbled, Joe, was in sending the telegram right after the murder."

"He's dead?" It popped out before his eyes had even had time to grow round and wide.

The question threw me off balance. I had to wrestle with my forehead to keep it from wrinkling, and I put too much calmness in my voice when I asked, "Is who dead?"

"Who? How do I know? Who do you mean?"

"Who did you think I meant?" I insisted.

"How do I know? Oh, all right! Old man Hambleton, Sue's father."

"That's right," I said, and took my hand away from his chin.

"And he was murdered, you say?" He hadn't moved his face an inch from the position into which I had lifted it. "How?"

"Arsenic fly paper."

"Arsenic fly paper." He looked thoughtful. "That's a funny one."

"Yeah, very funny. Where'd you go about buying some if you wanted it?"



"Buying it? I don't know. I haven't seen any since I was a kid. Nobody uses fly paper here in San Francisco anyway. There aren't enough flies."

"Somebody used some here," I said, "on Sue."

"Sue?" He jumped so that the sofa squeaked under him.

"Yeah. Murdered yesterday morning—arsenical fly paper."

"Both of them?" he asked incredulously.

"Both of who?"

"Her and her father."

"Yeah."

He put his chin far down on his chest and rubbed the back of one hand with the palm of the other. "Then I am in a hole," he said slowly.

"That's what," I cheerfully agreed. "Want to try talking yourself out of it?"

"Let me think."

I let him think, listening to the tick of the clock while he thought. Thinking brought drops of sweat out on his gray-white face. Presently he sat up straight, wiping his face with a fancily colored handkerchief. "I'll talk," he said. "I've got to talk now. Sue was getting ready to ditch Babe. She and I were going away. She—Here, I'll show you."

He put his hand in his pocket and held out a folded sheet of thick note paper to me. I took it and read:

DEAR JOE:

I can't stand this much longer—we've simply got to go soon. Babe beat me again tonight. Please, if you really love me, let's make it soon.

SUE

The handwriting was a nervous woman's, tall, angular, and piled up.

"That's why I made the play for Hambleton's grand," he said. "I've been shatting on my uppers for a couple of months, and when that letter came yesterday I just had to raise dough somehow to get her away. She wouldn't have stood for tapping her father though, so I tried to swing it without her knowing."

"When did you see her last?"

"Day before yesterday, the day she mailed that letter. Only I saw her in the afternoon—she was here—and she wrote it that night."

"Babe suspect what you were up to?"

"We didn't think he did. I don't know. He was jealous as hell all the time, whether he had any reason to be or not."

"How much reason did he have?"

Wales looked me straight in the eye and said, "Sue was a good kid."

I said, "Well, she's been murdered."

He didn't say anything.

Day was darkening into evening. I went to the door and pressed the light button. I didn't lose sight of Holy Joe Wales while I was doing it.

As I took my finger away from the button, something clicked at the window. The click was loud and sharp.

I looked at the window.

A man crouched there on the fire escape, looking in through the glass and lace curtain. He was a thick-featured dark man whose size identified him as Babe McCloor. The muzzle of a big black automatic was touching the glass in front of him. He had tapped the glass with it to catch our attention.

He had our attention.

There wasn't anything for me to do just then. I stood there and looked at him. I couldn't tell whether he was looking at me or at Wales. I could see him clearly enough, but the lace curtain spoiled my view of details like that. I imagined he wasn't neglecting either of us, and I didn't imagine the lace curtain hid much from him. He was closer to the curtain than we, and I had turned on the room's lights.

Wales, sitting dead-still on the sofa, was looking at McCloor. Wales's face wore a peculiar, stiffly sullen expression. His eyes were sullen. He wasn't breathing.

McCloor flicked the nose of his pistol against the pane, and a triangular piece of glass fell out, tinkling apart on the floor. It didn't, I was afraid, make enough noise to alarm MacMan

in the kitchen. There were two closed doors between here and there.

Wales looked at the broken pane and closed his eyes. He closed them slowly, little by little, exactly as if he were falling asleep. He kept his stiffly sullen blank face turned straight to the window.

McCloor shot him three times.

The bullets knocked Wales down on the sofa, back against the wall. Wales's eyes popped open, bulging. His lips crawled back over his teeth, leaving them naked to the gums. His tongue came out. Then his head fell down and he didn't move any more.

When McCloor jumped away from the window I jumped to it. While I was pushing the curtain aside, unlocking the window and raising it, I heard his feet land on the cement paving below.

MacMan flung the door open and came in, the girl at his heels.

"Take care of this," I ordered as I scrambled over the sill. "McCloor shot him."

Wales's apartment was on the second floor. The fire escape ended there with a counter-weighted iron ladder that a man's weight would swing down into a cement-paved court.

I went down as Babe McCloor had gone, swinging down on the ladder till within dropping distance of the court, and then letting go.

There was only one street exit to the court. I took it.

A startled-looking, smallish man was standing in the middle of the sidewalk close to the court, gaping at me as I dashed out.

I caught his arm, shook it. "A big guy running." Maybe I yelled. "Where?"

He tried to say something, couldn't, and waved his arm at billboards standing across the front of a vacant lot on the other side of the street.

I forgot to say, "Thank you," in my hurry to get over there.

I got behind the billboards by crawling under them instead

of going to either end, where there were openings. The lot was large enough and weedy enough to give cover to anybody who wanted to lie down and bushwhack a pursuer—even anybody as large as Babe McCloor.

While I considered that, I heard a dog barking at one corner of the lot. He could have been barking at a man who had run by. I ran to that corner of the lot. The dog was in a board-fenced backyard, at the corner of a narrow alley that ran from the lot to a street.

I chinned myself on the board fence, saw a wire-haired terrier alone in the yard, and ran down the alley while he was charging my part of the fence.

I put my gun back into my pocket before I left the alley for the street.

A small touring car was parked at the curb in front of a cigar store some fifteen feet from the alley. A policeman was talking to a slim dark-faced man in the cigar store doorway.

"The big fellow that come out of the alley a minute ago," I said. "Which way did he go?"

The policeman looked dumb. The slim man nodded his head down the street, said, "Down that way," and went on with his conversation.

I said, "Thanks," and went on down to the corner. There was a taxi phone there and two idle taxis. A block and a half below, a streetcar was going away. "Did the big fellow who came down here a minute ago take a taxi or the streetcar?" I asked the two taxi chauffeurs who were leaning against one of the taxis.

The rattier-looking one said, "He didn't take a taxi."

I said, "I'll take one. Catch that streetcar for me."

The streetcar was three blocks away before we got going. The street wasn't clear enough for me to see who got on and off it. We caught it when it stopped at Market Street.

"Follow along," I told the driver as I jumped out.

On the rear platform of the streetcar I looked through the glass. There were only eight or ten people aboard.

"There was a great big fellow got on at Hyde Street," I

said to the conductor. "Where'd he get off?"

The conductor looked at the silver dollar I was turning over in my fingers and remembered that the big man got off at Taylor Street. That won the silver dollar.

I dropped off as the streetcar turned into Market Street. The taxi, close behind, slowed down, and its door swung open. "Sixth and Mission," I said as I hopped in.

McCloor could have gone in any direction from Taylor Street. I had to guess. The best guess seemed to be that he would make for the other side of Market Street.

It was fairly dark by now. We had to go down to Fifth Street to get off Market, then over to Mission, and back up to Sixth. We got to Sixth Street without seeing McCloor. I couldn't see him on Sixth Street—either way from the crossing.

"On up to Ninth," I ordered, and while we rode told the driver what kind of man I was looking for.

We arrived at Ninth Street. No McCloor. I cursed and pushed my brains around.

The big man was a yegg. San Francisco was on fire for him. The yegg instinct would be to use a rattler to get away from trouble. The freight yards were in this end of town. Maybe he would be shifty enough to lie low instead of trying to powder. In that case, he probably hadn't crossed Market Street at all. If he stuck, there would still be a chance of picking him up tomorrow. If he was high-tailing, it was catch him now or not at all.

"Down to Harrison," I told the driver.

We went down to Harrison Street, and down Harrison to Third, up Bryant to Eighth, down Brannan to Third again, and over to Townsend—and we didn't see Babe McCloor.

"That's tough, that is," the driver sympathized as we stopped across the street from the Southern Pacific passenger station.

"I'm going over and look around in the station," I said. "Keep your eyes open while I'm gone."

When I told the copper in the station my trouble he introduced me to a couple of plain-clothes men who had been planted there to watch for McCloor. This had been done after Sue

Hambleton's body was found. The shooting of Holy Joe Wales was news to them.

I went outside again and found my taxi in front of the door, its horn working overtime, but too asthmatically to be heard indoors. The ratty driver was excited.

"A guy like you said come up out of King Street just now and swung on a Number 16 car as it pulled away," he said.

"Going which way?"

"Thataway," pointing southeast.

"Catch him," I said, jumping in.

The streetcar was out of sight around a bend in Third Street two blocks below. When we rounded the bend, the streetcar was slowing up, four blocks ahead. It hadn't slowed up very much when a man leaned far out and stepped off. He was a tall man, but didn't look tall on account of his shoulder spread. He didn't check his momentum, but used it to carry him across the sidewalk and out of sight.

We stopped where the man had left the car.

I gave the driver too much money and told him, "Go back to Townsend Street and tell the copper in the station that I've chased Babe McCloor into the S.P. yards."

I thought I was moving silently down between two strings of box cars, but I had gone less than twenty feet when a light flashed in my face and a sharp voice ordered, "Stand still, you."

I stood still. Men came from between cars. One of them spoke my name, adding, "What are you doing here? Lost?" It was Harry Pebble, a police detective.

I stopped holding my breath and said, "Hello, Harry. Looking for Babe?"

"Yes. We've been going over the rattlers."

"He's here. I just tailed him in from the street."

Pebble swore and snapped the light off.

"Watch, Harry," I advised. "Don't play with him. He's packing plenty of gun and he's cut down one boy tonight."

"I'll play with him," Pebble promised, and told one of the men with him to go over and warn those on the other side of

the yard that McCloor was in, and then to ring for reinforcements.

"We'll just sit on the edge and hold him in till they come," he said.

That seemed a sensible way to play it. We spread out and waited. Once Pebble and I turned back a lanky bum who tried to slip into the yard between us, and one of the men below us picked up a shivering kid who was trying to slip out. Otherwise nothing happened until Lieutenant Duff arrived with a couple of carloads of coppers.

Most of our force went into a cordon around the yard. The rest of us went through the yard in small groups, working it over car by car. We picked up a few hoboes that Pebble and his men had missed earlier, but we didn't find McCloor.

We didn't find any trace of him until somebody stumbled over a railroad bum huddled in the shadow of a gondola. It took a couple of minutes to bring him to, and he couldn't talk then. His jaw was broken. But when we asked if McCloor had slugged him, he nodded, and when we asked in which direction McCloor had been headed, he moved a feeble hand to the east.

We went over and searched the Santa Fe yards.

We didn't find McCloor.

I rode up to the Hall of Justice with Duff. MacMan was in the captain of detectives' office with three or four police sleuths.

"Wales die?" I asked.

"Yes."

"Say anything before he went?"

"He was gone before you were through the window."

"You held on to the girl?"

"She's here."

"She say anything?"

"We were waiting for you before we tapped her," detective-sergeant O'Gar said, "not knowing the angle on her."

"Let's have her in. I haven't had any dinner yet. How about the autopsy on Sue Hambleton?"

**"Chronic arsenic poisoning."**

"Chronic? That means it was fed to her little by little, and not in a lump?"

"Uh-huh. From what he found in her kidneys, intestines, liver, stomach and blood, Jordan figures there was less than a grain of it in her. That wouldn't be enough to knock her off. But he says he found arsenic in the tips of her hair, and she'd have to be given some at least a month ago for it to have worked out that far."

"Any chance that it wasn't arsenic that killed her?"

"Not unless Jordan's a bum doctor."

A policewoman came in with Peggy Carroll.

The blonde girl was tired. Her eyelids, mouth corners and body drooped, and when I pushed a chair out toward her she sagged down in it.

O'Gar ducked his grizzled bullet head at me.

"Now, Peggy," I said, "tell us where you fit into this mess."

"I don't fit into it." She didn't look up. Her voice was tired. "Joe dragged me into it. He told you."

"You his girl?"

"If you want to call it that," she admitted.

"You jealous?"

"What," she asked, looking up at me, her face puzzled, "has that got to do with it?"

"Sue Hambleton was getting ready to go away with him when she was murdered."

The girl sat up straight in the chair and said deliberately, "I swear to God I didn't know she was murdered."

"But you did know she was dead," I said positively.

"I didn't," she replied just as positively.

I nudged O'Gar with my elbow. He pushed his undershot jaw at her and barked, "What are you trying to give us? You knew she was dead. How could you kill her without knowing it?"

While she looked at him I waved the others in. They crowded close around her and took up the chorus of the sergeant's



song. She was barked, roared, and snarled at plenty in the next few minutes.

The instant she stopped trying to talk back to them I cut in again. "Wait," I said, very earnestly. "Maybe she didn't kill her."

"The hell she didn't," O'Gar stormed, holding the center of the stage so the others could move away from the girl without their retreat seeming too artificial. "Do you mean to tell me this baby--"

"I didn't say she didn't," I remonstrated. "I said maybe she didn't."

"Then who did?"

I passed the question to the girl. "Who did?"

"Babe," she said immediately.

O'Gar snorted to make her think he didn't believe her.

I asked, as if I were honestly perplexed, "How do you know that if you didn't know she was dead?"

"It stands to reason he did," she said. "Anybody can see that. He found out she was going away with Joe, so he killed her and then came to Joe's and killed him. That's just exactly what Babe would do when he found it out."

"Yeah? How long have *you* known they were going away together?"

"Since they decided to. Joe told me a month or two ago."

"And you didn't mind?"

"You've got this all wrong," she said. "Of course I didn't mind. I was being cut in on it. You know her father had the bees. That's what Joe was after. She didn't mean anything to him but an in to the old man's pockets. And I was to get my dib. And you needn't think I was crazy enough about Joe or anybody else to step off in the air for them. Babe got next and fixed the pair of them. That's a cinch."

"Yeah? How do you figure Babe would kill her?"

"That guy? You don't think he'd--"

"I mean, how would he go about killing her?"

"Oh!" She shrugged. "With his hands, likely as not."

"Once he'd made up his mind to do it, he'd do it quick and violent?" I suggested.

"That would be Babe," she agreed.

"But you can't see him slow-poisoning her—spreading it out over a month?"

Worry came into the girl's blue eyes. She put her lower lip between her teeth, then said slowly, "No, I can't see him doing it that way. Not Babe."

"Who can you see doing it that way?"

She opened her eyes wide, asking, "You mean Joe?"

I didn't say anything.

"Joe might have," she said persuasively. "God only knows what he'd want to do it for, why he'd want to get rid of the kind of meal ticket she was going to be. But you couldn't always guess what he was getting at. He pulled plenty of dumb ones. He was too slick without being smart. If he was going to kill her, though, that would be about the way he'd go about it."

"Were he and Babe friendly?"

"No."

"Did he go to Babe's much?"

"Not at all that I know about. He was too leery of Babe to take a chance on being caught there. That's why I moved upstairs, so Sue could come over to our place to see him."

"Then how could Joe have hidden the fly paper he poisoned her with in her apartment?"

"Fly paper!" Her bewilderment seemed honest enough.

"Show it to her," I told O'Gar.

He got a sheet from the desk and held it close to the girl's face.

She stared at it for a moment and then jumped up and grabbed by arm with both hands.

"I didn't know what it was," she said excitedly. "Joe had some a couple of months ago. He was looking at it when I came in. I asked him what it was for, and he smiled that wisenheimer smile of his and said, 'You make angels out of it,' and wrapped it up again and put it in his pocket. I didn't pay much atten-

tion to him; he was always fooling with some kind of tricks that were supposed to make him wealthy, but never did."

"Ever see it again?"

"No."

"Did you know Sue very well?"

"I didn't know her at all. I never even saw her. I used to keep out of the way so I wouldn't gum Joe's play with her."

"But you know Babe?"

"Yes, I've been on a couple of parties where he was. That's all I know him."

"Who killed Sue?"

"Joe," she said. "Didn't he have that paper you say she was killed with?"

"Why did he kill her?"

"I don't know. He pulled some awful dumb tricks sometimes."

"You didn't kill her?"

"No, no, no!"

I jerked the corner of my mouth at O'Gar.

"You're a liar," he bawled, shaking the fly paper in her face. "You killed her." The rest of the team closed in, throwing accusations at her. They kept it up until she was groggy and the policewoman beginning to look worried.

Then I said angrily, "All right. Throw her in a cell and let her think it over." To her, "You know what you told Joe this afternoon: this is no time to dummy up. Do a lot of thinking tonight."

"Honest to God I didn't kill her," she said.

I turned my back to her. The policewoman took her away.

"Ho-hum," O'Gar yawned. "We gave her a pretty good ride at that, for a short one."

"Not bad," I agreed. "If anybody else looked likely, I'd say she didn't kill Sue. But if she's telling the truth, then Holy Joe did it. And why should he poison the goose that was going to lay nice yellow eggs for him? And how and why did he cache the poison in their apartment? Babe had the motive, but damned

if he looks like a slow-poisoner to me. You can't tell, though; he and Holy Joe could even have been working together on it."

"Could," Duff said. "But it takes a lot of imagination to get that one down. Anyway you twist it, Peggy's our best bet so far. Go up against her again, hard, in the morning?"

"Yeah," I said. "And we've got to find Babe."

The others had had dinner. MacMan and I went out and got ours. When we returned to the detective bureau an hour later it was practically deserted of the regular operatives.

"All gone to Pier 42 on a tip that McCloor's there," Steve Ward told us.

"How long ago?"

"Ten minutes."

MacMan and I got a taxi and set out for Pier 42. We didn't get to Pier 42.

On First Street, half a block from the Embarcadero, the taxi suddenly shrieked and slid to a halt.

"What-?" I began, and saw a man standing in front of the machine. He was a big man with a big gun. "Babe," I grunted, and put my hand on MacMan's arm to keep him from getting his gun out.

"Take me to—" McCloor was saying to the frightened driver when he saw us. He came around to my side and pulled the door open, holding the gun on us.

He had no hat. His hair was wet, plastered to his head. Little streams of water trickled down from it. His clothes were dripping wet.

He looked surprised at us and ordered, "Get out."

As we got out he growled at the driver, "What the hell you got your flag up for if you had fares?"

The driver wasn't there. He had hopped out the other side and was scooting away down the street. McCloor cursed him and piked his gun at me, growling, "Go on, beat it."

Apparently he hadn't recognized me. The light here wasn't good, and I had a hat on now. He had seen me for only a few seconds in Wales's room.

I stepped aside. MacMan moved to the other side.

McCloor took a backward step to keep us from getting him between us and started an angry word.

MacMan threw himself on McCloor's gun arm.

I socked McCloor's jaw with my fist. I might just as well have hit somebody else for all it seemed to bother him.

He swept me out of his way and pasted MacMan in the mouth. MacMan fell back till the taxi stopped him, spit out a tooth, and came back for more.

I was trying to climb up McCloor's left side.

MacMan came in on his right, failed to dodge a chop of the gun, caught it square on the top of the noodle, and went down hard. He stayed down.

I kicked McCloor's ankle, but couldn't get his foot from under him. I rammed my right fist into the small of his back and got a left-handful of his wet hair, swinging on it. He shook his head, dragging me off my feet.

He punched me in the side and I could feel my ribs and guts flattening together like leaves in a book.

I swung my fist against the back of his neck. That bothered him. He made a rumbling noise down in his chest, crunched my shoulder in his left hand, and chopped at me with the gun in his right.

I kicked him somewhere and punched his neck again.

Down the street, at the Embarcadero, a police whistle was blowing. Men were running up First Street toward us.

McCloor snorted like a locomotive and threw me away from him. I didn't want to go. I tried to hang on. He threw me away from him and ran up the street.

I scrambled up and ran after him, dragging my gun out.

At the first corner he stopped to squirt metal at me—three shots. I squirted one at him. None of the four connected.

He disappeared around the corner. I swung wide around it, to make him miss if he were flattened to the wall waiting for me. He wasn't. He was a hundred feet ahead, going into a space between two warehouses. I went in after him, and out after him at the other end, making better time with my hundred and ninety pounds than he was making with his two-fifty.

He crossed a street, turning up, away from the waterfront.

There was a light on the corner. When I came into its glare he wheeled and leveled his gun at me. I didn't hear it click, but I knew it had when he threw it at me. The gun went past with a couple of feet to spare and raised hell against a door behind me.

McCloor turned and ran up the street. I ran up the street after him.

I put a bullet past him to let the others know where we were. At the next corner he started to turn to the left, changed his mind, and went straight on.

I sprinted, cutting the distance between us to forty or fifty feet, and yelled, "Stop or I'll drop you."

He jumped sidewise into a narrow alley.

I passed it on the jump, saw he wasn't waiting for me, and went in. Enough light came in from the street to let us see each other and our surroundings. The alley was blind-walled on each side and at the other end by tall concrete buildings with steel-shuttered windows and doors.

McCloor faced me, less than twenty feet away. His jaw stuck out. His arms curved down free of his sides. His shoulders were bunched.

"Put them up," I ordered, holding my gun level.

"Get out of my way, little man," he grumbled, taking a stiff-legged step toward me. "I'll eat you up."

"Keep coming," I said, "and I'll put you down."

"Try it." He took another step, crouching a little. "I can still get to you *with* slugs in me."

"Not where I'll put them." I was wordy, trying to talk him into waiting till the others came up. I didn't want to have to kill him. We could have done that from the taxi. "I'm no Annie Oakley, but if I can't pop your kneecaps with two shots at this distance, you're welcome to me. And if you think smashed kneecaps are a lot of fun, give it a whirl."

"Hell with that," he said and charged.

I shot his right knee.

He lurched toward me.

I shot his left knee.

He tumbled down.

"You would have it," I complained.

He twisted around, and with his arms pushed himself into a sitting position facing me.

"I didn't think you had sense enough to do it," he said through his teeth.

I talked to McCloor in the hospital. He lay on his back in bed with a couple of pillows slanting his head up. The skin was pale and tight around his mouth and eyes, but there was nothing else to show he was in pain.

"You sure devastated me, bo," he said when I came in.

"Sorry," I said, "but—"

"I ain't beefing. I asked for it."

"Why'd you kill Holy Joe?" I asked, off-hand, as I pulled a chair up beside the bed.

"Uh-uh—you're tooting the wrong ringer."

I laughed and told him I was the man in the room with Joe when it happened.

McCloor grinned and said, "I thought I'd seen you somewhere before. So that's where it was. I didn't pay no attention to your mug, just so your hands didn't move."

"Why'd you kill him?"

He pursed his lips, screwed up his eyes at me, thought something over, and said, "He killed a broad I knew."

"He killed Sue Hambleton?" I asked.

He studied my face a while before he replied, "Yep."

"How do you figure that out?"

"Hell," he said, "I don't have to. Sue told me. Give me a butt."

I gave him a cigarette, held a lighter under it, and objected. "That doesn't exactly fit in with other things I know. Just what happened and what did she say? You might start back with the night you gave her the goog."

He looked thoughtful, letting smoke sneak slowly out of his nose, then said, "I hadn't ought to hit her in the eye, that's a

fact. But, see, she had been out all afternoon and wouldn't tell me where she'd been, and we had a row about it. What's this—Thursday morning? That was Monday, then. After the row I went out and spent the night in a dump over on Army Street. I got home about seven the next morning. Sue was sick as hell, but she wouldn't let me get a croaker for her. That was kind of funny, because she was scared stiff."

McCloor scratched his head meditatively and suddenly drew in a great lungful of smoke, practically eating up the rest of the cigarette. He let the smoke leak out of mouth and nose together, looking dully through the cloud at me. Then he said brusquely, "Well, she went under. But before she went she told me she'd been poisoned by Holy Joe."

"She say how he'd given it to her?"

McCloor shook his head.

"I'd been asking her what was the matter, and not getting anything out of her. Then she starts whining that she's poisoned. 'I'm poisoned, Babe,' she whines. 'Arsenic. That damned Holy Joe,' she says. Then she won't say anything else. and it's not a hell of a while after that that she kicks off."

"Yeah? Then what'd you do?"

"I went gunning for Holy Joe. I knew him but didn't know where he jungled up, and didn't find out till yesterday. You was there when I came. You know about that. I had picked up a boiler and parked it over on Turk Street, for the getaway. When I got back to it, there was a copper standing close to it. I figured he might have spotted it as a hot one and was waiting to see who came for it, so I let it alone, and caught a streetcar instead, and cut for the yards. Down there I ran into a whole flock of hammer and saws and had to go overboard in China Basin, swimming up to a pier, being ranked again by a watchman there, swimming off to another, and finally getting through the line only to run into another bad break. I wouldn't of flagged that taxi if the *For Hire* flag hadn't been up."

"You knew Sue was planning to take a run-out on you with Joe?"



"I don't know it yet," he said. "I knew damned well she was cheating on me, but I didn't know who with."

"What would you have done if you had known that?" I asked.

"Me?" He grinned wolfishly. "Just what I did."

"Killed the pair of them," I said.

He rubbed his lower lip with a thumb and asked calmly, "You think I killed Sue?"

"You did."

"Serves me right," he said. "I must be getting simple in my old age. What the hell am I doing barbering with a lousy dick? That never got nobody nothing but grief. Well, you might just as well take it on the heel and toe now, my lad. I'm through spitting."

And he was. I couldn't get another word out of him.

The Old Man sat listening to me, tapping his desk lightly with the point of a long yellow pencil, staring past me with mild blue rimless-spectacled eyes. When I had brought my story up to date, he asked pleasantly, "How is MacMan?"

"He lost two teeth, but his skull wasn't cracked. He'll be out in a couple of days."

The Old Man nodded and asked, "What remains to be done?"

"Nothing. We can put Peggy Carroll on the mat again, but it's not likely we'll squeeze much more out of her. Outside of that, the returns are pretty well all in."

"And what do you make of it?"

I squirmed in my chair and said, "Suicide."

The Old Man smiled at me, politely but skeptically.

"I don't like it either," I grumbled. "And I'm not ready to write in a report yet. But that's the only total that what we've got will add up to. That fly paper was hidden behind the kitchen stove. Nobody would be crazy enough to try to hide something from a woman in her own kitchen like that. But the woman might hide it there."

"According to Peggy, Holy Joe had the fly paper. If Sue hid

it, she got it from him. For what? They were planning to go away together, and were only waiting till Joe, who was on the nut, raised enough dough. Maybe they were afraid of Babe, and had the poison there to slip him if he tumbled to their plan before they went. Maybe they meant to slip it to him before they went anyway.

"When I started talking to Holy Joe about murder, he thought Babe was the one who had been bumped off. He was surprised, maybe, but as if he was surprised that it had happened so soon. He was more surprised when he heard that Sue had died too, but even then he wasn't so surprised as when he saw McCloor alive at the window.

"She died cursing Holy Joe, and she knew she was poisoned, and she wouldn't let McCloor get a doctor. Can't that mean that she had turned against Joe, and had taken the poison herself instead of feeding it to Babe? The poison was hidden from Babe. But even if he found it, I can't figure him as a poisoner. He's too rough. Unless he caught her trying to poison him and made her swallow the stuff. But that doesn't account for the month-old arsenic in her hair."

"Does your suicide hypothesis take care of that?" the Old Man asked.

"It could," I said. "Don't be kicking holes in my theory. It's got enough as it stands. But, if she committed suicide this time, there's no reason why she couldn't have tried it once before—say after a quarrel with Joe a month ago—and failed to bring it off. That would have put the arsenic in her. There's no real proof that she took any between a month ago and day before yesterday."

"No real proof," the Old Man protested mildly, "except the autopsy's finding—chronic poisoning."

I was never one to let experts' guesses stand in my way. I said, "They base that on the small amount of arsenic they found in her remains—less than a fatal dose. And the amount they find in your stomach after you're dead depends on how much you vomit before you die."

The Old Man smiled benevolently at me and asked, "But

you're not, you say, ready to write this theory into a report? Meanwhile what do you propose doing?"

"If there's nothing else on tap, I'm going home, fumigate my brains with Fatimas, and try to get this thing straightened out in my head. I think I'll get a copy of *The Count of Monte Cristo* and run through it. I haven't read it since I was a kid. It looks like the book was wrapped up with the fly paper to make a bundle large enough to wedge tightly between the wall and stove, so it wouldn't fall down. But there might be something in the book. I'll see anyway."

"I did that last night," the Old Man murmured.

I asked, "And?"

He took a book from his desk drawer, opened it where a slip of paper marked a place, and held it out to me, one pink finger marking a paragraph.

"Suppose you were to take a milligramme of this poison the first day, two milligrammes the second day, and so on. Well, at the end of ten days you would have taken a centigramme: at the end of twenty days, increasing another milligramme, you would have taken three hundred centigrammes; that is to say, a dose you would support without inconvenience, and which would be very dangerous for any other person who had not taken the same precautions as yourself. Well, then, at the end of the month, when drinking water from the same carafe, you would kill the person who had drunk this water, without your perceiving otherwise than from slight inconvenience that there was any poisonous substance mingled with the water."

"That does it," I said. "That does it. They were afraid to go away without killing Babe, too certain he'd come after them. She tried to make herself immune from arsenic poisoning by getting her body accustomed to it, taking steadily increasing doses, so when she slipped the big shot in Babe's food she could eat it with him without danger. She'd be taken sick, but wouldn't die, and the police couldn't hang his death on her because she too had eaten the poisoned food."

"That clicks. After the row Monday night, when she wrote Joe the note urging him to make the getaway soon, she tried to

hurry up her immunity, and increased her preparatory doses too quickly, took too large a shot. That's why she cursed Joe at the end; it was his plan."

"Possibly she overdosed herself in an attempt to speed it along," the Old Man agreed, "but not necessarily. There are people who can cultivate an ability to take large doses of arsenic without trouble, but it seems to be a sort of natural gift with them, a matter of some constitutional peculiarity. Ordinarily, anyone who tried it would do what Sue Hambleton did—slowly poison themselves until the cumulative effect was strong enough to cause death."

Babe McCloor was hanged, for killing Holy Joe Wales, six months later.

## The Gatewood Caper

Harvey Gatewood had issued orders that I was to be admitted as soon as I arrived, so it took me only a little less than fifteen minutes to thread my way past the doorkeepers, office boys, and secretaries who filled up most of the space between the Gatewood Lumber Corporation's front door and the president's private office. His office was large, all mahogany and bronze and green plush, with a mahogany desk as big as a bed in the center of the floor.

Gatewood, leaning across the desk, began to bark at me as soon as the obsequious clerk who had bowed me in and bowed himself out.

"My daughter was kidnaped last night! I want the gang that did it if it takes every cent I got!"

"Tell me about it," I suggested.

But he wanted results, it seemed, and not questions, and so I wasted nearly an hour getting information that he could have given me in fifteen minutes.

He was a big bruiser of a man, something over 200 pounds of hard red flesh, and a czar from the top of his bullet head to the toes of his shoes that would have been at least number twelves if they hadn't been made to measure.

He had made his several millions by sandbagging everybody that stood in his way, and the rage he was burning up with now didn't make him any easier to deal with.

His wicked jaw was sticking out like a knob of granite and his eyes were filmed with blood—he was in a lovely frame of mind. For a while it looked as if the Continental Detective Agency was going to lose a client, because I'd made up my mind that he was going to tell me all I wanted to know, or I'd chuck the job.

But finally I got the story out of him.

His daughter Audrey had left their house on Clay Street at about 7 o'clock the preceding evening, telling her maid that she was going for a walk. She had not returned that night—though

Gatewood had not known that until after he had read the letter that came this morning.

The letter had been from someone who said that she had been kidnaped. It demanded \$ 50,000 for her release, and instructed Gatewood to get the money ready in hundred-dollar bills—so that there would be no delay when he was told the manner in which the money was to be paid over to his daughter's captors. As proof that the demand was not a hoax, a lock of the girl's hair, a ring she always wore, and a brief note from her, asking her father to comply with the demands, had been enclosed.

Gatewood had received the letter at his office and had telephoned to his house immediately. He had been told that the girl's bed had not been slept in the previous night and that none of the servants had seen her since she started out for her walk. He had then notified the police, turning the letter over to them, and a few minutes later he had decided to employ private detectives also.

"Now," he burst out, after I had wormed these things out of him, and he had told me that he knew nothing of his daughter's associates or habits, "go ahead and do something! I'm not paying you to sit around and talk about it!"

"What are you going to do?" I asked.

"Me? I'm going to put those—behind bars if it takes every cent I've got in the world!"

"Sure! But first you get that \$ 50,000 ready, so you can give it to them when they ask for it."

He clicked his jaw shut and thrust his face into mine.

"I've never been clubbed into doing anything in my life! And I'm too old to start now!" he said. "I'm going to call these people's bluff!"

"That's going to make it lovely for your daughter. But, aside from what it'll do to her, it's the wrong play. Fifty thousand isn't a whole lot to you, and paying it over will give us two chances that we haven't got now. One when the payment is made—a chance either to nab whoever comes for it or get a line on them. And the other when your daughter is returned. No matter how careful they are, it's a cinch she'll

be able to tell us something that will help us grab them."

He shook his head angrily, and I was tired of arguing with him. So I left, hoping he'd see the wisdom of the course I had advised before it was too late.

At the Gatewood residence I found butlers, second men, chauffeurs, cooks, maids, upstairs girls, downstairs girls, and a raft of miscellaneous flunkies—he had enough servants to run a hotel.

What they told me amounted to this: the girl had not received a phone call, note by messenger or telegram—the time-honored devices for luring a victim out to a murder or abduction—before she left the house. She had told her maid that she would be back within an hour or two; but the maid had not been alarmed when her mistress failed to return all that night.

Audrey was the only child, and since her mother's death she had come and gone to suit herself. She and her father didn't hit it off very well together—their natures were too much alike, I gathered—and he never knew where she was. There was nothing unusual about her remaining away all night. She seldom bothered to leave word when she was going to stay overnight with friends.

She was nineteen years old, but looked several years older, about five feet five inches tall, and slender. She had blue eyes, brown hair—very thick and long—was pale and very nervous. Her photographs, of which I took a handful, showed that her eyes were large, her nose small and regular and her chin pointed.

She was not beautiful, but in the one photograph where a smile had wiped off the sullenness of her mouth, she was at least pretty.

When she left the house she was wearing a light tweed skirt and jacket with a London tailor's label in them, a buff silk shirtwaist with stripes a shade darker, brown wool stockings, low-heeled brown oxfords, and an untrimmed gray felt hat.

I went up to her rooms—she had three on the third floor—and looked through all her stuff. I found nearly a bushel of photographs of men, boys, and girls; and a great stack of letters of varying degrees of intimacy, signed with a wide assortment of

names and nicknames. I made notes of all the addresses I found.

Nothing in her rooms seemed to have any bearing on her abduction, but there was a chance that one of the names and addresses might be of someone who had served as a decoy. Also, some of her friends might be able to tell us something of value.

I dropped in at the Agency and distributed the names and addresses among the three operatives who were idle, sending them out to see what they could dig up.

Then I reached the police detectives who were working on the case—O'Gar and Thode—by telephone, and went down to the Hall of Justice to meet them. Lusk, a post office inspector, was also there. We turned the job around and around, looking at it from every angle, but not getting very far. We were all agreed, however, that we couldn't take a chance on any publicity, or work in the open, until the girl was safe.

They had had a worse time with Gatewood than I—he had wanted to put the whole thing in the newspapers, with the offer of a reward, photographs and all. Of course, Gatewood was right in claiming that this was the most effective way of catching the kidnapers—but it would have been tough on his daughter if her captors happened to be persons of sufficiently hardened character. And kidnapers as a rule aren't lambs.

I looked at the letter they had sent. It was printed with pencil on ruled paper of the kind that is sold in pads by every stationery dealer in the world. The envelope was just as common, also addressed in pencil, and postmarked *San Francisco, September 20, 9 p.m.* That was the night she had been seized.

The letter read:

SIR:

We have your charming daughter and place a value of \$ 50,000 upon her. You will get the money ready in \$ 100 bills at once so there will be no delay when we tell you how it is to be paid over to us.

We beg to assure you that things will go badly with your daughter should you not do as you are told, or should you bring the police into this matter, or should you do anything foolish.



\$ 50,000 is only a small fraction of what you stole while we were living in mud and blood in France for you, and we mean to get that much or else!

THREE

A peculiar note in several ways. They are usually written with a great pretense of partial illiterateness. Almost always there's an attempt to lead suspicion astray. Perhaps the ex-service stuff was there for that purpose—or perhaps not.

Then there was a postscript:

We know someone who will buy her even after we are through with her—in case you won't listen to reason.

The letter from the girl was written jerkily on the same kind of paper, apparently with the same pencil.

DADDY—

Please do as they ask! I am so afraid—

AUDREY

A door at the other end of the room opened, and a head came through.

"O'Gar! Thode! Gatewood just called up. Get up to his office right away!"

The four of us tumbled out of the Hall of Justice and into a police car.

Gatewood was pacing his office like a maniac when we pushed aside enough hirelings to get to him. His face was hot with blood and his eyes had an insane glare in them.

"She just phoned me!" he cried thickly, when he saw us.

It took a minute or two to get him calm enough to tell us about it.

"She called me on the phone. Said, 'Oh, Daddy! Do something! I can't stand this—they're killing me!' I asked her if she knew where she was, and she said, 'No, but I can see Twin Peaks from here. There's three men and a woman, and—' And then I heard a man curse, and a sound as if he had struck her, and the phone went dead. I tried to get central to give me the number, but she couldn't! It's a damned outrage the way the telephone system is run. We pay enough for service. God knows, and we. . ."

O'Gar scratched his head and turned away from Gatewood.

"In sight of Twin Peaks! There are hundreds of houses that are!"

Gatewood meanwhile had finished denouncing the telephone company and was pounding on his desk with a paperweight to attract our attention.

"Have you people done anything at all?" he demanded.

I answered him with another question: "Have you got the money ready?"

"No," he said, "I won't be held up by anybody!"

But he said it mechanically, without his usual conviction—the talk with his daughter had shaken him out of some of his stubbornness. He was thinking of her safety a little now instead of only his own fighting spirit.

We went at him hammer and tongs for a few minutes, and after a while he sent a clerk out for the money.

We split up the field then. Thode was to take some men from headquarters and see what he could find in the Twin Peaks end of town; but we weren't very optimistic over the prospects there—the territory was too large.

Lusk and O'Gar were to carefully mark the bills that the clerk brought from the bank, and then stick as close to Gatewood as they could without attracting attention. I was to go out to Gatewood's house and stay there.

The abductors had plainly instructed Gatewood to get the money ready immediately so that they could arrange to get it on short notice—not giving him time to communicate with anyone or make plans.

Gatewood was to get hold of the newspapers, give them the whole story, with the \$ 10,000 reward he was offering for the abductors' capture, to be published as soon as the girl was safe—so we would get the help of publicity at the earliest possible moment without jeopardizing the girl.

The police in all the neighboring towns had already been notified—that had been done before the girl's phone message had assured us that she was held in San Francisco.

Nothing happened at the Gatewood residence all that evening. Harvey Gatewood came home early; and after dinner he

paced his library floor and drank whiskey until bedtime, demanding every few minutes that we, the detectives in the case, do something besides sit around like a lot of damned mummies. O'Gar, Lusk, and Thode were out in the street, keeping an eye on the house and neighborhood.

At midnight Harvey Gatewood went to bed. I declined a bed in favor of the library couch, which I dragged over beside the telephone, an extension of which was in Gatewood's bedroom.

At 2.30 the telephone bell rang. I listened in while Gatewood talked from his bed.

A man's voice, crisp and curt: "Gatewood?"

"Yes."

"Got the dough?"

"Yes."

Gatewood's voice was thick and blurred—I could imagine the boiling that was going on inside him.

"Good!" came the brisk voice. "Put a piece of paper around it and leave the house with it, right away! Walk down Clay Street, keeping on the same side as your house. Don't walk too fast and keep walking. If everything's all right, and there's no elbows tagging along, somebody'll come up to you between your house and the waterfront. They'll have a handkerchief up to their face for a second, and then they'll let it fall to the ground.

"When you see that, you'll lay the money on the pavement, turn around, and walk back to your house. If the money isn't marked, and you don't try any fancy tricks, you'll get your daughter back in an hour or two. If you try to pull anything—remember what we wrote you! Got it straight?"

Gatewood sputtered something that was meant for an affirmative, and the telephone clicked silent.

I didn't waste any of my precious time tracing the call—it would be from a public telephone, I knew—but yelled up the stairs to Gatewood, "You do as you were told, and don't try any foolishness!"

Then I ran out into the early morning air to find the police detectives and the post office inspector.

They had been joined by two plainclothesmen, and had two

automobiles waiting. I told them what the situation was, and we laid hurried plans.

O'Gar was to drive in one of the cars down Sacramento Street, and Thode, in the other, down Washington Street. These streets parallel Clay, one on each side. They were to drive slowly, keeping pace with Gatewood, and stopping at each cross street to see that he passed.

When he failed to cross within a reasonable time they were to turn up to Clay Street—and their actions from then on would have to be guided by chance and their own wits.

Lusk was to wander along a block or two ahead of Gatewood, on the opposite side of the street, pretending to be mildly intoxicated.

I was to shadow Gatewood down the street, with one of the plainclothesmen behind me. The other plainclothesman was to turn in a call at headquarters for every available man to be sent to City Street. They would arrive too late, of course, and as likely as not it would take them some time to find us; but we had no way of knowing what was going to turn up before the night was over.

Our plan was sketchy enough, but it was the best we could do—we were afraid to grab whoever got the money from Gatewood. The girl's talk with her father that afternoon had sounded too much as if her captors were desperate for us to take any chances on going after them roughshod until she was out of their hands.

We had hardly finished our plans when Gatewood, wearing a heavy overcoat, left his house and turned down the street.

Farther down, Lusk, weaving along, talking to himself, was almost invisible in the shadows. There was no one else in sight. That meant that I had to give Gatewood at least two blocks' lead, so that the man who came for the money wouldn't tumble to me. One of the plainclothesmen was half a block behind me, on the other side of the street.

We walked two blocks down, and then a chunky man in a derby hat came into sight. He passed Gatewood, passed me, went on.

Three blocks more.

A touring car, large, black, powerfully engined and with lowered curtains, came from the rear, passed us, went on. Possibly a scout. I scrawled its license number down on my pad without taking my hand out of my overcoat pocket.

Another three blocks.

A policeman passed, strolling along in ignorance of the game being played under his nose; and then a taxicab with a single male passenger. I wrote down its license number.

Four blocks with no one in sight ahead of me but Gatewood—I couldn't see Lusk any more.

Just ahead of Gatewood a man stepped out of a black doorway, turned around, called up to a window for someone to come down and open the door for him.

We went on.

Coming from nowhere, a woman stood on the sidewalk fifty feet ahead of Gatewood, a handkerchief to her face. It fluttered to the pavement.

Gatewood stopped, standing stifflegged. I could see his right hand come up, lifting the side of the overcoat in which it was pocketed—and I knew his hand was gripped around a pistol.

For perhaps half a minute he stood like a statue. Then his left hand came out of his pocket, and the bundle of money fell to the sidewalk in front of him, where it made a bright blur in the darkness. Gatewood turned abruptly, and began to retrace his steps homeward.

The woman had recovered her handkerchief. Now she ran to the bundle, picked it up, and scuttled to the black mouth of an alley a few feet distant—a rather tall woman, bent, and in dark clothes from head to feet.

In the black mouth of the alley she vanished.

I had been compelled to slow up while Gatewood and the woman stood facing each other, and I was more than a block away now. As soon as the woman disappeared, I took a chance and started pounding my rubber soles against the pavement.

The alley was empty when I reached it.

It ran all the way through to the next street, but I knew that

the woman couldn't have reached the other end before I got to this one. I carry a lot of weight these days, but I can still step a block or two in good time. Along both sides of the alley were the rears of apartment buildings, each with its back door looking blankly, secretively, at me.

The plainclothesman who had been trailing behind me came up, then O'Gar and Thode in their cars, and soon, Lusk. O'Gar and Thode rode off immediately to wind through the neighboring streets, hunting for the woman. Lusk and the plainclothesman each planted himself on a corner from which two of the streets enclosing the block could be watched.

I went through the alley, hunting vainly for an unlocked door, an open window, a fire escape that would show recent use—any of the signs that a hurried departure from the alley might leave.

*Nothing!*

O'Gar came back shortly with some reinforcements from headquarters that he had picked up, and Gatewood.

**Gatewood was burning.**

"Bungled the damn thing again! I won't pay your agency a nickel, and I'll see that some of these so called detectives get put back in a uniform and set to walking beats!"

"What'd the woman look like?" I asked him.

"I don't know! I thought you were hanging around to take care of her! She was old and bent, kind of, I guess, but I couldn't see her face for her veil. I don't know! What the hell were you men doing? It's a damned outrage the way..."

I finally got him quieted down and took him home, leaving the city men to keep the neighborhood under surveillance. There were fourteen or fifteen of them on the job now, and every shadow held at least one.

The girl would head for home as soon as she was released and I wanted to be there to pump her. There was an excellent chance of catching her abductors before they got very far, if she could tell us anything at all about them.

Home, Gatewood went up against the whiskey bottle again, while I kept one ear cocked at the telephone and the other at

the front door. O'Gar or Thode phoned every half hour or so to ask if we'd heard from the girl.

They had still found nothing.

At 9 o'clock they, with Lusk, arrived at the house. The woman in black had turned out to be a man and got away.

In the rear of one of the apartment buildings that touched the alley—just a foot or so within the back door—they found a woman's skirt, long coat, hat and veil—all black. Investigating the occupants of the house, they had learned that an apartment had been rented to a young man named Leighton three days before.

Leighton was not home, when they went up to his apartment. His rooms held a lot of cold cigarette butts, an empty bottle, and nothing else that had not been there when he rented it.

The inference was clear; he had rented the apartment so that he might have access to the building. Wearing women's clothes over his own, he had gone out of the back door—leaving it unlatched behind him—to meet Gatewood. Then he had run back into the building, discarded his disguise and hurried through the building, out the front door, and away before we had our feeble net around the block—perhaps dodging into dark doorways here and there to avoid O'Gar and Thode in their cars.

Leighton, it seemed, was a man of about thirty, slender, about five feet eight or nine inches tall, with dark hair and eyes; rather good-looking, and well-dressed on the two occasions when people living in the building had seen him, in a brown suit and a light brown felt hat.

There was no possibility, according to both of the detectives and the post office inspector, that the girl might have been held, even temporarily, in Leighton's apartment.

Ten o'clock came, and no word from the girl.

Gatewood had lost his domineering bullheadedness by now and was breaking up. The suspense was getting him, and the liquor he had put away wasn't helping him. I didn't like him either personally or by reputation, but this morning I felt sorry for him.

I talked to the Agency over the phone and got the reports of the operatives who had been looking up Audrey's friends. The

last person to see her had been an Agnes Dangerfield, who had seen her walking down Market Street near Sixth, alone, on the night of her abduction—some time between 8.15 and 8.45. Audrey had been too far away from the Dangerfield girl to speak to her.

For the rest, the boys had learned nothing except that Audrey was a wild, spoiled youngster who hadn't shown any great care in selecting her friends—just the sort of girl who could easily fall into the hands of a mob of highbinders.

Noon struck. No sign of the girl. We told the newspapers to turn loose the story, with the added developments of the past few hours.

Gatewood was broken; he sat with his head in his hands, looking at nothing. Just before I left to follow a hunch I had, he looked up at me, and I'd never have recognized him if I hadn't seen the change take place.

"What do you think is keeping her away?" he asked.

I didn't have the heart to tell him what I had every reason to suspect, now that the money had been paid and she had failed to show up. So I stalled with some vague assurances and left.

I caught a cab and dropped off in the shopping district. I visited the five largest department stores, going to all the women's wear departments from shoes to hats, and trying to learn if a man—perhaps one answering Leighton's description—had been buying clothes in the past couple days that would fit Audrey Gatewood.

Failing to get any results, I turned the rest of the local stores over to one of the boys from the Agency, and went across the bay to canvass the Oakland stores.

At the first one I got action. A man who might easily have been Leighton had been in the day before, buying clothes of Audrey's size. He had bought lots of them, everything from lingerie to a coat, and—my luck was hitting on all cylinders—had had his purchases delivered to T. Offord, at an address on Fourteenth Street.

At the Fourteenth Street address, and apartment house, I



found Mr and Mrs Theodore Offord's names in the vestibule for Apartment 202.

I had just found the apartment number when the front door opened and a stout, middle-aged woman in a gingham house-dress came out. She looked at me a bit curiously, so I asked, "Do you know where I can find the superintendent?"

"I'm the superintendent," she said.

I handed her a card and stepped indoors with her. "I'm from the bonding department of the North American Casualty Company"—a repetition of the lie that was printed on the card I had given her—"and a bond for Mr Offord has been applied for. Is he all right so far as you know?" With the slightly apologetic air of one going through with a necessary but not too important formality.

"A bond? That's funny! He is going away tomorrow."

"Well, I can't say what the bond is for," I said lightly. "We investigators just get the names and addresses. It may be for his present employer, or perhaps the man he is going to work for has applied for it. Or some firms have us look up prospective employees before they hire them, just to be safe."

"Mr Offord, so far as I know, is a very nice young man," she said, "but he has been here only a week."

"Not staying long, then?"

"No. They came here from Denver, intending to stay, but the low altitude doesn't agree with Mrs Offord, so they are going back."

"Are you sure they came from Denver?"

"Well," she said, "they told me they did."

"How many of them are there?"

"Only the two of them; they're young people."

"Well, how do they impress you?" I asked, trying to get over the impression that I thought her a woman of shrewd judgement.

"They seem to be a very nice young couple. You'd hardly know they were in their apartment most of the time, they're so quiet. I'm sorry they can't stay."

"Do they go out much?"

"I really don't know. They have their keys, and unless I

should happen to pass them going in or out I'd never see them."

"Then, as a matter of fact you couldn't say whether they stayed away all night some nights or not. Could you?"

She eyed me doubtfully—I was stepping way over my pretext now, but I didn't think it mattered—and shook her head. "No, I couldn't say."

"They have many visitors?"

"I don't know. Mr Offord is not—"

She broke off as a man came in quietly from the street, brushed past me, and started to mount the steps to the second floor.

"Oh, dear!" she whispered. "I hope he didn't hear me talking about him. That's Mr Offord."

A slender man in brown, with a light brown hat—Leighton, perhaps.

I hadn't seen anything of him except his back, nor he anything except mine. I watched him as he climbed the stairs. If he had heard the woman mention his name he would use the turn at the head of the stairs to sneak a look at me.

He did.

I kept my face stolid, but I knew him.

He was "Penny" Quayle, a con man who had been active in the east four or five years before.

His face was as expressionless as mine. But he knew me.

A door on the second floor shut. I left the woman and started for the stairs.

"I think I'll go up and talk to him," I told her.

Coming silently to the door of Apartment 202, I listened. Not a sound. This was no time for hesitation. I pressed the bell-button.

As close together as the tapping of three keys under the fingers of an expert typist, but a thousand time more vicious, came three pistol shots. And waist-high in the door of Apartment 202 were three bullet holes.

The three bullets would have been in my fat carcass if I hadn't learned years ago to stand to one side of strange doors when making uninvited calls.

Inside the apartment sounded a man's voice, sharp, commanding. "Cut it, kid! For God's sake, not that!"

A woman's voice, shrill, bitter, spiteful, screaming blasphemies.

Two more bullets came through the door.

"Stop! No! No!" The man's voice had a note of fear in it now.

The woman's voice, cursing hotly. A scuffle. A shot that didn't hit the door.

I hurled my foot against the door, near the knob, and the lock broke away.

On the floor of the room, a man—Quayle—and a woman were tussling. He was bending over her, holding her wrists, trying to keep her down. A smoking pistol was in one of her hands. I got to it in a jump and tore it loose.

"That's enough!" I called to them when I was planted. "Get up and receive company."

Quayle released his antagonist's wrists, whereupon she struck at his eyes with curved, sharp-nailed fingers, tearing his cheek open. He scrambled away from her on hands and knees, and both of them got to their feet.

He sat down on a chair immediately, panting and wiping his bleeding cheek with a handkerchief.

She stood, hands on hips, in the center of the room, glaring at me. "I suppose," she spat, "you think you've raised hell!"

I laughed—I could afford to.

"If your father is in his right mind," I told her, "he'll do it with a razor strap when he gets you home again. A fine joke you picked out to play on him!"

"If *you'd* been tied to him as long as I have and had been bullied and held down as much, I guess *you'd* do most anything to get enough money so that you could go away and live your own life."

I didn't say anything to that. Remembering some of the business methods Harvey Gatewood had used—particularly some of his war contracts that the Department of Justice was still investigating—I suppose the worst that could be said

about Audrey was that she was her father's own daughter.

"How'd you rap to it?" Quayle asked me, politely.

"Several ways," I said. "First, one of Audrey's friends saw her on Market Street between 8.15 and 8.45 the night she disappeared and your letter to Gatewood was postmarked 9 p. m. Pretty fast work. You should have waited a while before mailing it. I suppose she dropped it in the post office on her way over here?"

Quayle nodded.

"Then second," I went on, "there was that phone call of hers. She knew it took anywhere from ten to fifteen minutes to get her father on the wire at the office. If she had gotten to a phone while imprisoned, time would have been so valuable that she'd have told her story to the first person she got hold of—the switchboard operator, most likely. So that made it look as if, besides wanting to throw out that Twin Peaks line, she wanted to stir the old man out of his bullheadedness.

"When she failed to show up after the money was paid, I figured it was a sure bet that she had kidnaped herself. I knew that if she came back home after faking this thing, we'd find it out before we'd talked to her very long—and I figured she knew that too and would stay away.

"The rest was easy—I got some good breaks. We knew a man was working with her after we found the woman's clothes you left behind, and I took a chance on there being no one else in it. Then I figured she'd need clothes—she couldn't have taken any from home without tipping her mitt—and there was an even chance that she hadn't laid a stock beforehand. She's got too many girl friends of the sort that do a lot of shopping to make it safe for her to have risked showing herself in stores. Maybe, then, the man would buy what she needed. And it turned out that he did, and that he was too lazy to carry away his purchases, or perhaps there were too many of them, and so he had them sent out. That's the story."

Quayle nodded again.

"I was damned careless," he said, and then, jerking a contemptuous thumb toward the girl. "But what can you expect?

She's had a skinful of hop ever since we started. Took all my time and attention keeping her from running wild and gumming the works. Just now was a sample—I told her you were coming up and she goes crazy and tries to add your corpse to the wreckage!"

The Gatewood reunion took place in the office of the captain of inspectors on the second floor of the Oakland City Hall, and it was a merry little party.

For over an hour it was a tossup whether Harvey Gatewood would die of apoplexy, strangle his daughter or send her off to the state reformatory until she was of age. But Audrey licked him. Besides being a chip off the old block, she was young enough to be careless of consequences, while her father, for all his bullheadedness, had had some caution hammered into him.

The card she beat him with was a threat of spilling everything she knew about him to the newspapers, and at least one of the San Francisco papers had been trying to get his scalp for years.

I don't know what she had on him, and I don't think he was any too sure himself; but with his war contracts still being investigated by the Department of Justice, he couldn't afford to take a chance. There was no doubt at all that she would have done as she threatened.

And so, together, they left for home, sweating hate for each other from every pore.

We took Quayle upstairs and put him in a cell, but he was too experienced to let that worry him. He knew that if the girl was to be spared, he himself couldn't very easily be convicted of anything.

I was glad it was over. It had been a tough caper.



# ПОСЛЕСЛОВИЕ



## ЗАГАДКА ДЭШИЛА ХЕММЕТТА

Жизненный и творческий путь признанного классика американской детективной прозы Дэшила Хемметта (1894—1961) полон противоречий и парадоксов.

Человек поразительной работоспособности и плодовитости — за какие-нибудь десять лет — пять романов, десятки рассказов, множество журнальных и газетных статей и рецензий (кстати, он сам не без хвастовства утверждал, что за тридцать часов непрерывной работы написал заключительную треть романа «Стеклянный ключ») — с 1934 года практически ничего не пишет, кроме кино- и радиоадаптаций уже опубликованного...

Знаменитый писатель, который бедствовал, потому что у него временами в самом буквальном смысле не было ни цента, но он не мог писать только ради денег...

Завзятый денди, уделявший повышенное внимание своей внешности и одежде, признанный любимец голливудской богемы, неприменный участник экстравагантных вечеринок, убежденный поклонник рассеянного образа жизни, разъезжавший в шикарном лимузине с шофером...

Профессиональный детектив, не один год прослуживший в частном сыском агентстве Пинкертона, сотрудники которого нередко приглашались хозяевами предприятий для «охраны» штрейкбрехеров от бастующих, для подавления стачек и демонстраций, для слежки за профсоюзными лидерами...

Человек, навсегда оставивший свое имя в пантеоне неколебимых и нестигаемых борцов с маккартизмом, расизмом и фашизмом в США, без колебания пошедший за свои убеждения в тюрьму: человек, за которым несколько десятилетий следило ФБР, потому что он никогда не скрывал своей приверженности к марксизму...

Может ли совместиться все это в характере и судьбе одного и того же человека?

Тем не менее таков был Дэшил Хемметт, противоречивый и единый во всех своих лицах, человек безусловно выдающегося, правда, быть может, не до конца реализо-



ванного дарования, смелый реформатор детективного жанра, о котором крупный болгарский писатель и тонкий знаток истории мирового детектива Богомил Райнов сказал: «Дэшил Хемметт, в отличие от многих своих предшественников, накопил опыт и знания не за чтением старых детективных романов и не путем кабинетных упражнений в разгадывании воображаемых убийств, а в реальном преступном мире, существующем в конкретной действительности и, несмотря на это, столько времени остававшемся вне поля зрения стольких поколений сочинителей»<sup>1</sup>. Б. Райнов прав, говоря о том, что Хемметт «первый писатель, который в душной и угрожающей атмосфере своего времени дерзнул изобразить гангстеризм и коррупцию во всем их тлетворном влиянии на американскую действительность, определил некоторые весьма глубокие причины этого явления и рассказал о преступлении не как о чем-то неразрывно связанном с жизнью и бытом подонков общества, а как о буднях его социальной верхушки, поощряющей и использующей насилие в качестве достижения своих корыстных целей»<sup>2</sup>.

Дэшил Хемметт родился 27 мая 1894 года в округе Сент-Мери, штат Мериленд. В местных архивах сохранилась запись о смерти некоего Роберта Хемметта, случившейся 13 июня 1719 года. Об этом человеке в семье бытовали разнообразные легенды. Согласно одной, первый Хемметт был «временно закабаленным» (*"indentured servant"*), и ему пришлось не покладая рук отрабатывать сумму, потребовавшуюся на переезд из Англии в Америку. Другое предание более колоритно. Рассказывали, что в Новый Свет он попал вовсе не по доброй воле, а был сослан в Виргинию или одну из Каролин за мошенничество и воровство. Но поскольку ничего другого он делать не умел и не хотел, он и там принялся за старое и вскоре вновь попался с поличным. Суд постановил отправить преступника назад в Англию и там казнить. Но шустрый Роберт сумел бежать из-под стражи. Он осел в Мериленде, где и остепенился, положив начало роду американских Хемметтов.

Потомки его (они так и жили в Мериленде) были, в основном, процветающими фермерами и мелкими тор-

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<sup>1</sup> Богомил Райнов. «Черный роман», М.: Прогресс, 1975, с. 78.

<sup>2</sup> Там же, с. 87.

говцами. Отец будущего писателя сменил немало занятий: был почтмейстером, мировым судьей, политическим деятелем окружного масштаба, трамвайным кондуктором, клерком. Попытка нажить состояние торговлей закончилась крахом, он разорился как раз в тот год, когда его сын Дэшил поступил на первый курс балтиморского политехникума, что стало завершением формального образования юного Хемметта — нужно было зарабатывать хлеб насущный.

С 1909 по 1915 год Дэшил сменил немало занятий, но ничто его не увлекало. Наконец в 1915 году он стал детективом в Национальном детективном агентстве Пинкертон — событие, имевшее для него, как оказалось, немаловажное значение. Основанное в 1850 году, это частное детективное агентство долгие годы оставалось крупнейшим в стране. Его эмблемой был раскрытый глаз, а девизом слова: «Мы никогда не спим» (“We never sleep”).

Балтиморское отделение агентства было, пожалуй, одним из самых больших, и его штаб-квартира помещалась в The Continental Building. Несомненно, что эта контора и послужила прототипом придуманного Хемметтом Continental Detective Agency в тех рассказах и романах, главным действующим лицом которых является неутомимый и безымянный «оперативник» (Continental op), плотный и грубоватый коротышка, лишенный какого бы то ни было романтического ореола. По признанию Хемметта, прототипом этого образа стал заместитель начальника балтиморского отделения, известный сыщик Джеймс Райт, который обучал Хемметта азам сыскальной профессии. Именно Райту Хемметт обязан столь превосходным знанием «правил игры», по которым действуют частные детективы.

В 1918 году Хемметта призывают в армию. Но принять участие в военных действиях ему не довелось. Он подхватывает инфлюэнцу, которая, скорее всего, и стала причиной открывшегося процесса в легких. В 1919 году Хемметта освобождают из армии с диагнозом — открытый туберкулез. В последующие годы Хемметт лицом к лицу столкнулся с острой нуждой. Он получал мизерную пенсию по инвалидности — 40 долларов в месяц. Положение усугублялось и тем, что вскоре по выходе из госпиталя он женился. Молодая семья ждала ребенка, и Хемметт вновь вернулся к Пинкертону. Но у него не было ни здоровья, ни сил, чтобы нести нагрузку штатного со-

трудника — он мог выполнять лишь отдельные поручения.

Есть немало свидетельств о том, что чаще всего ему доставалась «черная работа» — приходилось выслеживать подозреваемых, иными словами, быть самым обычным «филером». Жена Хемметта рассказывала, что как-то раз, когда он преследовал очередного злоумышленника, сообщник последнего подкараулил незадачливого сыщика в темной аллее и ударил его камнем по голове. В другой раз Хемметта посадили в тюремную камеру в Сан-Франциско для получения информации от находившегося там преступника. Добыл он информацию или нет — осталось тайной, но тюремных вшей домой принес...

Впоследствии сам Хемметт, по свидетельству биографов, охотно делился воспоминаниями о своем непосредственном участии в раскрытии ряда громких дел, но поскольку рассказы эти были полны противоречий, доверять им не приходится. Можно, впрочем, предположить, что он отработывал на своих слушателях сюжетные ходы будущих детективных шедевров...

В периоды обострения болезни Хемметт буквально глотает книги. Чтение его беспорядочно и бессистемно — в сфере его интересов сочинения криминалистов, работы по средневековой истории, биографии великих людей.

Задумав стать газетным репортером, он осваивает стенографию.

В поисках своей стези пробует сочинять рекламные тексты, работая над ними наудачу — без предварительных заказов. Иногда ему удается пристроить придуманное и получить гонорар — чаще «натурой», — так, за рекламное объявление для большого обувного магазина в Сан-Франциско он получил пару ботинок, которые, надо думать, емугодились.

Тогда же Хемметт начинает писать прозу. Любопытно, что как литератор он дебютировал в 1922 году в журнале «Смарт сет» (*The Smart Set*), издаваемом тогда Г.Л. Менкеном и Дж. Нейтаном. «Смарт сет» отличался высокой репутацией у американской интеллектуальной элиты и очень низкими гонорарами: дело в том, что на его страницах публиковались не только «восходящие звезды» (Ю.О'Нил, Ф.С. Фицджеральд, О. Хаксли, С. Моэм), но и никому не известные литераторы-дебютанты.

Первые рассказы Хемметта явно написаны под влиянием прочитанного — они проницны, но многословны,

в них еще нет своего голоса. Вместе с тем шло подспудное формирование собственной манеры, которая сама очень скоро станет образцом для подражания. Об этом свидетельствует фрагмент «Из записок частного детектива», опубликованный в «Смарт сет» в 1923 году и вызвавший у литературных знатоков ассоциации с хемпнгуэевскими виньетками из цикла «В наше время».

Приводя ряд примеров из «Мемуаров», биограф Хемметта Ричард Лейман верно отмечает рождавшееся в них своеобразие стиля и тона писателя: "Hammett's *Memoirs* is notable for its candid realism and understated irony:

"I was once falsely accused of perjury and had to perjure myself to escape arrest.

I know a forger who left his wife because she learned to smoke cigarettes while he was serving a term in prison." *Memoirs* is authoratative and self-confident. The tone is aloof and smart-alecky anticipating the wisecracking quality of his later detective stories."<sup>1</sup>

Формально выдерживается как будто строгая и протокольная документальность, но уже ощущается некое особое, хемметтовское, слегка проницкое отстранение рассказчика от событий, о которых он повествует.

В 20-е годы нашего столетия детективный жанр, по определению его историков Дж. Симмонса, Х. Хейкрофта и других, переживал свой «золотой век». Романы английских писателей А. Кристи, Д. Сейерс, Э. Беркли и многих других относились к типу канонического «интеллектуального» детектива, строившегося по классической модели: преступление — расследование — разгадка. Среди американских детективистов наибольшей известностью пользовался Уильям Хантингтон Райт, писавший под псевдонимом Ван Дейн.

В 1926 году Райт сформулировал свое определение «хорошего детектива», который, по его мнению, должен был обладать четкой фабулой, как и классические модели. Ван Дейн был уверен, что психологизм в детективе уместен не более, чем в кроссворде, изображение насилия должно быть минимальным, а сама история обладать единством, то есть быть выдержана в одном настроении или ключе. Рассказы о приключениях постоянного героя Ван Дейна Фило Вэнса печатались в достаточно респектабельных

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<sup>1</sup> R. Layman. *The Shadow Man. The Life and Work of Dashiell Hammett*, N.Y., 1981, p. 32.

журналах типа «Скрибнерс», что служило своеобразным знаком качества, поскольку в 20-е годы в США к детективу относились как к жанру второразрядному, которому в наиболее престижных журналах не находилось места.

Но именно в те годы для удовлетворения страсти массовой (и стремительно растущей) аудитории к развлекательному чтению существовали так называемые “pulp magazines” (pulp), печатавшиеся на плохой бумаге и продававшиеся по очень низкой цене. В 1922 году в США выходило до 20 000 периодических изданий, рассчитанных на самые разные вкусы и открывавших широкое поле деятельности для писателей самой разной ориентации. Что же касается “pulp”, то одновременно выходило до 70 журналов и журнальчиков, публиковавших приключенческие и развлекательные истории. Авторы, сотрудничавшие в этих изданиях, получали по центу за слово (впрочем, именно столько «стоило» слово и в элитарном «Смарт сет»), но многие из них, набив руку, писали так быстро, что умудрялись и тут неплохо зарабатывать. Большинство подобных изданий существовало недолго и без следа исчезло, но некоторые постепенно набирали авторитет и солидную читательскую аудиторию.

Так произошло, к примеру, с «Черной маской» (*The Black Mask*). Основанная в 1920 году все теми же Г. Л. Менкеном и Дж. Нейтаном в качестве «кормилицы» интеллектуального «Смарт сет», «Черная маска» впоследствии сменила нескольких хозяев, приобретая все большую и большую популярность, и стала ведущим изданием приключенческой и детективной прозы. Среди ее постоянных авторов были ныне признанные классиками жанра Эрл Стенлв Гарднер, Дэшил Хемметт и Реймонд Чандлер.

Начиная с 1923 года Хемметт регулярно выступает на страницах «Черной маски». Его первые публикации подписаны псевдонимом Питер Коллинсон. Псевдонимы были в ходу у авторов детективов, причем по самым разным причинам. Некоторые из них, как и их герои-сыщики, были любителями и стеснялись «осквернять» свое имя публикацией на страницах столь непрестижных изданий. Иные же, для кого писание детективных историй было не хобби, а профессией, средством заработка, нуждались в псевдонимах, чтобы иметь возможность публиковать в одном номере сразу несколько материалов. Бывало и такое — под одним псевдонимом писались вестерны, под другим — детективы, под третьим — научная или не очень

научная фантастика. Однако Хемметт очень скоро начинает подписываться своей фамилией.

Пожалуй, именно в «Черной маске» и родилось то новое направление в развитии детективного жанра, которое позже было определено как «школа крутого детектива» ("hard-boiled school"). Основными тематико-стилистическими признаками этой школы исследователи считали повышенный интерес к теневым сторонам американской действительности, любовь к изображению насилия, проницательное отношение к традиционной морали, попираемой не только злодеями, но и теми, кто с ними сражается.

Одним из пионеров «крутого детектива» стал некий Эрролл Дейли, создавший популярный образ сыщика Рейса Уильямса, физически крепкого, грубого и говорливого, никогда не раздумывающего перед тем, как пустить в ход кулак или пистолет. Появление очередного рассказа о Рейсе Уильямсе обычно увеличивало тираж «Черной маски» на 20—25 процентов. Дейли, так никогда и не сумевший подняться над уровнем литературной поделки, воплотил — пусть на грани пародии — характерные черты нового направления. Как отмечает Р. Лейман, "While the Golden Age detectives—such as Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, and later Dorothy Sayers's Lord Peter Wimsey and S.S. Van Dine's Philo Vance were savants engaged in highly specialized approaches to crimes which often resembled intricate puzzles more closely than any real-life criminal activity, Race Williams and the many so-called hard-boiled heroes who were created in his image, were super-heroes of a different sort operating in an equally implausible world of exaggerated violence."<sup>1</sup>

Хемметт как бы вел двойную полемику — и с классическим интеллектуальным детективом, и с «перегибами» «крутого детектива». Без сомнений, прав Лейман, считая, что именно Хемметт в своих произведениях следовал жизненной правде, изображал действительность такой, какой она была, избегая как недомолвок, так и преувеличений: "For him hard-boiled did not mean insensitivity in the face of gore. Rather that term expressed the hard realism of his characters who accepted the fact of criminality without excessive emotion as real detectives would who are at once hardened to the fact of crime and appalled by it. Hammett

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<sup>1</sup> R. Layman. *The Shadow Man. The Life and Work of Dashiell Hammett*, N.Y., 1981, p. 45.

took conventional detective story plots, peopled them with realistic criminals and realistic detectives and solved the puzzles he created as they would have been solved had they actually occurred. His stories are hard-boiled in the sense that Ernest Hemingway's are."<sup>1</sup>

Примерно то же сказал в свое время и Реймонд Чандлер, многому научившийся у Хемметта и сегодня рядом с ним называемый одним из основоположников «школы крутого детектива»: "Hammett took the murder out of the Venetian vase and dropped it into the alley... Hammett took murder back to people who commit it for reasons, not just to provide a corpse, and with the means at hand, not hand-wrought duelling pistols, curare and tropical fish. He put these people down on paper as they were, and he made them talk and think in the language they customarily used for these purposes."<sup>2</sup>

Усилиями Хемметта (а затем и Чандлера) жанр-развлечение превращался в жанр-размышление (не теряя, впрочем, и развлекательного начала), размышление об американском обществе, о тех ценностях, что уважаются в нем «в теории», и о разрыве между этой теорией и социальной практикой. Современный американский критик Джон Кэвелти в своей монографии о массовой литературе XX века видит в «крутом детективе» Хемметта и Чандлера не только точную и злую социальную критику, но и ревизию — или даже отрицание — столь популярной в Америке идеи материального успеха (не говоря уж об успехе любой ценой, что осуждалось и в классическом детективе): "Overtly the classic gangster film and the hard-boiled detective story portrayed the downfall of the individual who had sought wealth and power by illegal and immoral means. Yet beneath the moralistic surface of the story they presented a burning resentment against respectable society... The hard-boiled detective presented a man who not only acted outside the law to bring true justice, but has turned his back on the ideals of success. In this formula the treatment of crime enabled writers to express latent doubts about the ideals of success while still insisting on the basic moral proposition that 'crime doesn't pay'."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> R. Layman, p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> Цит. по: F. MacShane. *The Life and Work of Raymond Chandler*, N.Y., 1976, pp. 37-48.

<sup>3</sup> J. Cawelti. *Adventure, Mystery and Romance*, Chicago & London, 1976, p. 86.

1923 год, когда в «Черной маске» появился рассказ Хемметта *Arson Plus*, стал годом рождения сотрудника частного детективного агентства, который так и не получил имени собственного, а прошел по страницам многих произведений под названием «Continental op». Тип повествования и герой (а точнее, антигерой, ибо в «оперативнике» даже в тех случаях, когда ему сопутствовала удача, было не так много героического и уж совсем не было романтического) быстро добились читательского успеха. Хемметт не расставался с «оперативником» целых семь лет и написал о его похождениях двадцать шесть рассказов, две повести и два романа: «Красная жатва» и «Проклятые Дейнов». Нельзя не привести мнение самого Хемметта о его популярном персонаже: "I see him a little man going forward day after day through mud and blood and death and deceit—as callous and brutal and cynical as necessary—towards a dim goal with nothing to push or pull him towards it except he's hired to reach it."<sup>1</sup>

Важная особенность этого персонажа заключалась в том, что он вел себя и делал свое дело как живой человек — не гений, как знаменитые расследователи Конан Дойла, Агаты Кристи и Дороти Сейерс, и не кровожадно хладнокровный убийца, как бесконечные персонажи "pulp magazines". Герой Хемметта расследовал преступление не «скуки ради» и не из обостренного чувства справедливости, а потому что это было его профессией, и как профессионал он стремился не ударить в грязь лицом.

Но эксплуатация одного, даже очень удачного, персонажа не могла продолжаться бесконечно. Хемметт явно начинает ощущать определенную «выработанность» тем, сюжетов, да и самого «оперативника» — временами в историях о его похождениях проглядывает шаблон. Писатель берет своеобразный творческий отпуск: с марта 1926 по январь 1927 года в печати никаких новых вещей не появляется. Это время стало для него периодом накопления сил, ожиданием нового творческого прилива, который вскоре и настал — с 1927 по 1933 год Хемметт создает свои основные вещи: пять романов и лучшие из рассказов.

Но пока, в 1926 году, он вновь возвращается к занятиям рекламой, уже, естественно, на другом уровне — становится заведующим отделом рекламы крупной ювелирной фирмы в Сан-Франциско.

<sup>1</sup> Цит. по: R. Layman. *The Shadow Man. The Life and Work of Dashiell Hammett*, N.Y., 1981, p. 62.



С начала 1927 и до конца 1929 года ведет в журнале «Сатердей ревью ов литерачер» (*Saturday Review of Literature*) колонку, рецензируя продукцию своих коллег по детективному цеху. Хемметт-критик был строг и даже суров, имея на это право — ведь в отличие от подавляющего большинства и критиков, и критикуемых он знал, о чем писал, по собственному опыту.

Свою колонку Хемметт использовал не только как обычный рецензент текущей литературы: он обобщал наблюдения и формулировал собственное кредо. По его мнению, большинству «романов о преступлении» не доставало правды жизни, отражения современной американской действительности. Персонажи детективных произведений, не устал повторять Хемметт, должны подчиняться тем же общим законам, что и подлинная реалистическая художественная литература, — они должны говорить и вести себя так, как это делают обыкновенные американцы, а мотивировки их поступков должны быть не плодом фантазии автора, а объясняться социальной жизнью США 20-х годов.

Небывалый прежде уровень организованного гангстеризма, откровенная коррупция в государственных и муниципальных органах управления стали характернейшими признаками американской общественной жизни в начале XX века. Впрочем, эти тенденции нашли свое развитие и в последующие десятилетия. Книги Хемметта звучат как нельзя злободневно и остро и в наши дни, когда высокие чины американской администрации снова и снова оказываются замешаны в разного рода шумных скандалах, от скрытого злоупотребления своим положением до прямых взяток и тесных связей с мафией.

Собственно, об этом первый роман Хемметта — «Красная жатва» (1929). «Оперативник» приезжает в вымышленный город Персонвилл по вызову Дональда Уилсона, отец которого в течение сорока лет владел горнорудной корпорацией, банком и местными газетами, иными словами, “owned Personville soul, heart, skin and bowels”. Но Дональд, решившийся на борьбу с коррупцией, погибает, так и не встретившись с «оперативником». Тот же, подчинясь желанию отца убитого, Элихью Уилсона, подозревающего, что сын убит местными гангстерами, приступает к расследованию. Надо сразу сказать, что с могущественным стариком, который “along with these pieces of property... owned a United States senator, a couple of representatives, the mayor and most of the state legislature”,

«оперативник» ведет себя с чувством собственного достоинства, если не сказать вольно.

Убийца обнаруживается им без особого труда, и уже по собственной инициативе, а может, в память несостоявшегося клиента Дональда «оперативник» решает уничтожить в городе коррупцию. В этом смысле он вполне соответствует законам поэтики «нового детектива». Дж. Кэвелти пишет: "The hard-boiled detective is a traditional man of virtue in an amoral and corrupt world. His toughness protects the essence of his character, which is honorable and noble. In a world where the law is inefficient and susceptible to corruption, where the recognized social elite is too decadent and selfish to accomplish justice and protect the innocent, the private detective is forced to take over the basic moral function of exposure, protection, judgement and execution."<sup>1</sup>

Законы жанра неумолимы — «оперативник» одерживает победу в ситуации, казалось бы, безвыходной и практически в одиночку. Ему удается поссорить между собой враждующие гангстерские кланы, которые и уничтожают друг друга. Тут, конечно, Хемметт, не погрешив против «правил игры», несколько погрешил против истины. Однако, если отвлечься от сюжетных перипетий и обратиться к образу оперативника, то сразу же обнаружатся любопытные факты, несущие немалый заряд социальной критики.

Поверим в правдоподобность рассказанной нам истории — что ж, «оперативник» был целеустремлен и последователен, опыт и немалая доля чистого везения помогли ему добиться своего.

Однако какими методами он достиг цели? С точки зрения общепринятой морали они вряд ли приемлемы. В чем же дело? Сам ли «оперативник» безнравственен, или он — продукт определенного морального климата? Думается, прежде всего он — жертва социальных условий...

«Оперативник» действует, исходя из обстоятельств, а не руководствуясь неким абстрактным кодексом или даже официальным законом. Ведь закон в США, как хорошо известно, всегда на стороне богатых и власть имущих. И любому, кто хочет добиться торжества хотя бы частной, сугубо ограниченной справедливости, прихо-

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<sup>1</sup> J. Cawelti. *Adventure, Mystery and Romance*, Chicago & London, 1976, p. 86.

дится действовать только на свой страх и риск. Именно так и ведет себя «оперативник».

Многочисленные перестрелки, в которых и «снимается красная жатва», не заслоняют главного — в свое время старик Уилсон призвал гангстеров в город, чтобы расправиться с забастовщиками, — он и есть непосредственный виновник того, что творится теперь. Гангстеры, слишком много знающие о его темных делишках, напрочь вышли из-под его контроля.

Гангстеры и полиция Персонвилла на одно лицо, они вообще практически ничем не отличаются: за пухлую пачку долларов блюстителей порядка покупают прямо на месте — во время их налета на игорный притон, и тогда они на полицейских машинах любезно развозят по домам тех, на кого собирались охотиться.

Любопытно, что Хемметт вольно обращается с каноническими правилами «романа о преступлении». Убийца Дональда, обнаруженный, по существу, в самом начале пребывания «оперативника» в Персонвилле, непосредственно с гангстерами не связан. Но и рамки поведения сыщика из «крутого детектива» оказываются писателю тесны. Мотивы мести у «оперативника» постепенно вытесняют первоначальные благородные намерения, возникает та самая непосредственная, личная заинтересованность, от которой начинающего Хемметта предостерегал его учитель Райт в балтиморской конторе Пинкертон. Недаром в финале романа «оперативник» признается, что получил от своего шефа нагоняй. Здесь проявляется характерная черта «хемметтовского канона»: от романа к роману он упрямо отказывается показать «идеального расследователя», рыцаря без страха и упрека. И «оперативник», и Сэм Спейд, и Нед Бомонт не свободны от пэянов эпического порядка, и в этом они плоть от плоти общества, в котором живут.

Идейную позицию Хемметта проясняют последние страницы книги. Пойдя на некоторую уступку законам жанра и увенчав «оперативника» лаврами победителя, писатель в главном остался верен правде жизни. Нemoщный и больной старик Уилсон не только единственный уцелевший из «злодеев»: он вообще «в полном порядке». Следовательно, история не может не повториться. Живучесть Уилсона в романе — символ того неистребимого зла, которое не страшится ни пуль, ни приговоров суда. Большой Бизнес — основа основ американской действитель-

ности, — по мнению Хемметта, криминален и «кримогенен» по самой своей сути — он ежечасно порождает все новые и новые преступления, и это проницески снижает значимость победы «оперативника».

И «Красная жатва», и последовавший за ним роман «Проклятье Дейнов» (1929) понравились и читателям, и критикам (хотя второй роман так и остался у Хемметта слабейшим). Но настоящая известность пришла к Хемметту в 1930 году после публикации романа «Мальтийский сокол».

Хемметта сравнивали с Хемпинуэем и Ларднером, хвалили за лаконизм, точность стиля, умелое обращение с подтекстом и за мастерское построение сложной детективной интриги.

Видный критик Ал. Уолкотт назвал роман «Мальтийский сокол» «лучшим американским детективом всех времен». Хотя в таких, типично американских, формулировках всегда есть известная доля преувеличения, книга действительно удалась — динамика сюжета, держащего читателя в постоянном напряжении, гнетущая атмосфера насилия, жестокости и алчности в обществе, где все готовы друг друга продать, и причем по дешевке.

После выхода «Проклятья Дейнов» Хемметт начинает поиски нового центрального персонажа взамен послужившего верой и правдой «оперативника». В каждом следующем романе герой-расследователь будет иметь имя, хотя типаж остается примерно тот же. В «Мальтийском соколе» расследование «поручено» частному детективу Сэму Спейду, который несколько более индивидуализирован, нежели «оперативник». В Сэме есть внутренняя порядочность, свой кодекс чести, но действия его вновь не слишком приемлемы с точки зрения общепринятой морали — и снова отнюдь не потому, что автора эта самая мораль не устраивает: Хемметт не очень, может быть, заметно, но весьма настойчиво отстраняется от своего героя, не давая ему утвердиться в роли бескомпромиссного борца со злом. В этом еще одно отличие «хемметтовского канона» от классического детектива, где автор и расследователь всегда заодно.

В каждом романе Хемметт настойчиво пытается раздвинуть рамки детективной интриги. Его цель не только развлечь читателя хитросплетениями сюжета, у него всегда есть что-то «про запас». В «Красной жатве» — это социальное обличение; в «Проклятье Дейнов» — размышления

о природе Зла; граничащая с патологией человеческая алчность и ее последствия — в центре «сверхзадачи» «Мальтийского сокола». Кстати, Бриджит О'Шоннесси из «Мальтийского сокола» имела свою предшественницу и в «Красной жатве» — это эпизодический персонаж Дина Бранд, страсть которой к деньгам была буквально на грани психического расстройства.

Выстроенный по всем законам «крутого детектива», следующий роман, «Стеклянный ключ» (1931), в то же время произведение о человеческих, частных и общественных, взаимоотношениях, о том, как уродливо деформированы они в конкретных социальных условиях капиталистической Америки...

События романа в своей мгновенной смене и чередовании образуют своеобразный узор, позволяющий проследить в изображаемом неотвратимую закономерность. То, что внешне выглядит голым авантурным действием, обнаруживает у Хемметта многозначительный подтекст. Автор в данном случае полностью исключает из фабулы элемент случайности: все происходит именно так, как и должно произойти. Поступки персонажей социально детерминированы.

Поэтику прозы Хемметта можно определить как поэтику действия. Через действие раскрываются характеры. Действие объединяет все художественные компоненты романа, включая диалог. Реплики, которыми обмениваются персонажи, напоминают перестрелку враждующих банд или удары в драке, когда нужно одержать верх любой ценой — противники так и норовят ударить друг друга ниже пояса и при этом совсем не таятся. В этом смысле очень показателен эпизод изъятия денег у Берни Диспейна.

Во всех романах Хемметта, и особенно в «Стеклянном ключе» (который сам писатель считал своей лучшей книгой), диалог выполняет еще одну важную функцию. В сюжете книги собственно авантурное действие и политическое лицедейство переплетаются и взаимопроникают настолько, что порой трудно разобраться, где кончается уголовщина и начинается политика, где бандиты и подонки, а где — респектабельные граждане, «опора нации». Хотя бы в первом приближении помогает диалог. С представителями почитаемых кругов и с друзьями центральный персонаж Нед Бомонт общается на одном языке, а с гангстерами О'Рори — совсем на другом. Часто, слыш-

ком часто вся разница между теми и другими его собеседниками сводится исключительно к словарю. В «Стеклянном ключе» сосуществуют по крайней мере три стилевых пласта: нормальный литературный язык, на котором ведется повествование; разговорная речь образованных слоев общества; жаргон «дна», возмещающий бедность словаря выразительной красочностью словечек и оборотов.

Хемметт одним из первых в американской литературе заговорил о родственных связях между политикой и организованной преступностью.

В этом смысле показательны не только Пол Мэдвиг, профессиональный политик и «делатель сенаторов», но и гангстер О'Рори, всерьез задумывающийся о политической карьере, и боящийся его и его присных как огня окружной прокурор Фарр, и респектабельный Генри, «сенатор старой школы», готовый ради политической карьеры принести в жертву собственного сына.

Снова, как и в «Красной жатве», расследование одного частного преступления оборачивается приговором той социальной системе, внутри которой живут и действуют герои, обществу, в котором правит жестокий расчет, а цели всегда оправдывают средства. Снова преступление раскрыто, преступник вроде бы выведен на чистую воду, но зло — главное зло — так и не будет наказано. Против этого зла можно восставать, бороться в одиночку, но в конечном итоге с ним приходится сосуществовать, ибо источник его — не в частных отклонениях от социальной нормы (как полагали представители «классического детектива»), но в пагубности самой этой нормы.

Вряд ли случайно заглавием романа стал образ ключа из сна Джанет Генри. Этот хрупкий стеклянный ключ — одноразового пользования. Подобно героям старинной сказки, персонажи романа — прежде всего Джанет и Нед — открывают этим ключом ту самую таинственную дверь, за которой обнаруживают то, о чем и не подозревали и чего предпочли бы не знать. Но забыть открывшееся их взору, «закрыть» дверь уже нельзя. Отныне они обречены жить, отягощенные новым мучительным знанием, которое приводит к тому, что Джанет теряет отца, а Нед друга.

Доказав формальную невиновность Пола Мэдвига, Нед в то же время убеждается в его нравственной ущербности, тем более ужасающей, что сам Мэдвиг и не подозревает

о том, насколько весомым оказался его вклад в преступление сенатора Генри. Финал романа проникнут горечью, какой не знали ни Конан Дойл, ни Ван Дейн, по разоблачении очередного злоумышленника ставившие весьма оптимистическую точку. Хемметт же как бы забывает об игровом, условном начале жанра. С точки зрения этой «игры» Нед Бомонт — безусловный герой. Хемметт, однако, предлагает взглянуть на него в другом ракурсе, и тогда читатель видит слабого человека, потрясенного открывшимся ему и вместе с другим слабым человеком — Джанет — выбирающего единственный возможный путь — бегство.

В 1930 году Хемметт снова начинает вести колонку рецензента, на этот раз в «Нью-Йорк evening пост» (*The New York Evening Post*). Не без издевательства обнаруживает он несуразности и благоглупости в произведениях многих коллег по цеху и составляет своего рода проницательский реестр типичных ошибок. Вот некоторые из них:

2. The Colt's. 45 automatic pistol has no chambers. The cartridges are put into magazine.

5. A shot or a stab wound is simply felt as a blow or push at first. It's some little time before any burning or other painful sensation begins.

6. When you are knocked unconscious you do not feel the blow that does it.

10. It is impossible to see anything by the flash of the ordinary gun, though it is easy to imagine you have seen things.

11. Not nearly so much can be seen by moonlight as you imagine. This is especially true of colors.

19. A trained detective shadowing a subject does not ordinarily leap from doorway to doorway and does not hide behind trees and poles. He knows no harm is done if the subject sees him now and then.

«Худой человек» (1934) — последний роман Хемметта — получил, пожалуй, наиболее восторженный прием у тогдашних читателей. Хотя в нем нет показа близости преступного мира к правящим кругам, но источник интриги — убийство преуспевающим адвокатом Гербертом Макколеем своего клиента, богатого изобретателя Клайда Уайнента, для того, чтобы получить крупную сумму денег, — показателен для общего климата «американского образа жизни», как и следующая за этим первоначальным преступлением серия убийств, с помощью которых Макколей пытается избавиться от своих вольных или невольных сообщников.

Расследующий волею обстоятельств преступление Ник Чарлз, в прошлом, как и его создатель, профессиональный детектив, пожалуй, самый обаятельный из всех сыщиков Хемметта. Вообще, в этом романе Хемметт как нигде блеснул даром точной и лаконичной психологической зарисовки, словно в последний раз напомнив читателям о своих нереализованных возможностях мастера прозы без эпитета «детективная». Перед читателями проходит целая галерея персонажей, запоминающихся не с точки зрения их отношения к детективной фабуле, но как человеческие типы, изображенные с удивительной достоверностью. Успех романа и его главных героев Нипка Чарлза и его жены Норы, может быть, хотя бы отчасти объясняется тем, что для Хемметта это была очень личная книга, отразившая и сладкое бремя успеха, и пришедшую к нему большую любовь. Лилиан Хеллман, которой он говорил, что она стала для него прототипом Норы, в интервью 1969 года сказала: "Mr. Hammett had once been a detective long before he was a great writer and I used to nag him to go back to work as a detective—chiefly so, in my mind, I could follow him around and see what would happen. He'd grow very angry at the idea. But it also gave him something to write about. I think [*The Thin Man*] was about a man and a woman who liked each other very much and who drank too much."<sup>1</sup>

Как выяснилось, это был финал его собственно писательской деятельности — оставляя литературу (как тогда казалось, на время), Хемметт работает сценаристом для голливудской студии «Метро-Голдвин-Майер», в это же время появляются экранизации «Стеклянного ключа», «Худого человека» и — вторично — «Мальтийского сокола».

В 30-е годы Хемметт — популярная фигура и в киномире Голливуда, и в литературно-издательских кругах Нью-Йорка. Элегантный, остроумный, чуть эксцентричный, обладающий даром с первого же взгляда располагать к себе, он отдается светской жизни. Званые обеды, приемы, увеселительные поездки — и писание сценариев, приносящее деньги, о которых всего несколько лет назад он не мог и мечтать (и которые он тратит не задумываясь, так что их вечно не хватает). — все это захватывает его с головой.

<sup>1</sup> Цит. по: *The Big Knockover and Other Stories*, Penguin Books, 1971, p. 6.



В конце 30-х годов не без влияния Лиллан Хеллман Хемметт начинает проявлять нарастающий интерес к политике. Вместе с Хемингуэем, Дос Пассосом, Дороти Паркер и Хеллман он собирает средства для республиканской Испании, вносит деньги на создание фильма о борющейся Испании «Испанская земля» (сценарист — Э. Хемингуэй, режиссер — голландский коммунист Йорис Ивенс). Подпись Хемметта — среди тех, кто в 1938 году призывал президента Рузвельта отменить Закон о нейтралитете, согласно которому была запрещена официальная помощь республиканской Испании.

В Голливуде Хемметт активно выступает за создание Гильдии сценаристов, становится одним из лидеров движения против произвола магнатов киноиндустрии. В конечном счете эта борьба увенчалась успехом и Гильдия получила право на существование, но активная роль Хемметта не прошла даром, заслужив ему ярлык «смутьяна» и «красного».

В 1938 году Хемметт выступает на массовом антифашистском митинге в Нью-Йорке, годом позже становится председателем комитета Professionals Conference Against Nazi Persecutions. Хемметт ратует за расширение избирательных прав для черных американцев и представителей других расовых и национальных меньшинств, поддерживает деятельность профсоюзов, снова и снова выступает как убежденный антифашист. Казалось бы, особым радикализмом его платформа не отличается, но и она в Голливуде конца 30-х годов выглядит «опасной» — его карьера сценариста стремительно близится к концу.

Вполне отдавая себе отчет в неизбежности разрыва с Голливудом, Хемметт ищет иные формы деятельности. Так, на какое-то время он возглавляет редколлегию журнала левой ориентации «Иквалити» (*Equality*). Но наиболее важным эпизодом его общественно-политической деятельности тех лет стало избрание Хемметта председателем Комитета по гражданским правам (1940), в задачу которого, среди прочего, входила поддержка кандидатов Коммунистической партии США на выборах в местные и федеральные органы управления. Тогда же, в 1940 году, Хемметтом начинает интересоваться ФБР, полагая его одним из наиболее активных и влиятельных деятелей коммунистического движения в Америке. Точных данных о принадлежности Хемметта к коммунистической партии

не сохранилось, хотя биографы предполагают, что Хемметт вступил в нее в 1937—1938 годах.

Из 278-страничного досье ФБР на Хемметта явствует, что начиная с 1940 года Хемметт находится под постоянным наблюдением — отчеты приставленных к нему агентов соседствуют с доносами «доброжелателей» и коллекцией апокрифов — слухов и легенд, так и не подтвержденных документально. В рапорте осведомителя от 5 февраля 1942 года, в частности, говорится: "Dashiehl Hammett is wearing himself thin trying to prevent Communist Party being ruled off the ballot in New York... Hammett is passing himself off as a political independent, but in October he deluged New York unions with telegrams urging support [of the Communist candidate] in the November presidential elections."<sup>1</sup>

В период с 1938 по 1942 год Хемметт участвует в самых разных мероприятиях, организуемых представителями прогрессивного крыла. Он выступает на митингах, работает в комитетах, постоянно оказывает финансовую поддержку левым начинаниям (как установило ФБР, Хемметт вносил в среднем до 1000 долларов в месяц в фонды различных леворадикальных организаций). Несмотря на то, что он отошел от собственно литературной деятельности, его писательская известность в это время не только не ослабевает, но и крепнет: его романы переиздаются массовыми тиражами, инсценируются для радио. В 1941 году в третий раз экранизируется «Мальтийский сокол». Фильм становится киноклассикой, с него же начинает свою блистательную карьеру исполнитель главной роли Хэмфри Богарт (впоследствии создавший кинообраз героя-расследователя романов Чандлера частного детектива Филиппа Марло).

С первых дней вступления США во вторую мировую войну Хемметт стремится в действующую армию, но его снова и снова отвергают — по возрасту и состоянию здоровья. Только в 1942 году он наконец добивается своего. Впрочем, его неблагодарность скоро становится известной армейским чинам — сначала он оказывается в гарнизоне Пеннандо (Пенсильвания), где под своеобразным «домашним арестом» содержатся «потенциально подрывные элементы», затем его переводят на остров Адак на Алеутах.

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<sup>1</sup> Цит. по: R. Layman. *The Shadow Man. The Life and Work of Dashiehl Hammett*, N.Y., 1981, p. 181.

По окончании войны Хемметт возвращается в Нью-Йорк и возобновляет свою общественно-политическую деятельность. В 1946 году он снова возглавляет Комитет по гражданским правам, начинает преподавать литературное мастерство в Школе социальных исследований им. Джефферсона.

В эпоху разгула маккартизма и антикоммунистической истерии Хемметт сохранил верность своим убеждениям, что потребовало от него немало стойкости и мужества. В 1951 году он отказывается отвечать суду о своей деятельности в Комитете по гражданским правам и проводит полгода в тюрьме. Опубликованные протоколы допросов Хемметта в печально знаменитой комиссии по расследованию антиамериканской деятельности, возглавлявшейся мракобесом Маккарти, свидетельствуют о неукротимой силе духа писателя. Он не только никого не предал, но и своими ответами бросил вызов рьяным защитникам тех «американских ценностей», которые столь убедительно развенчал в своих лучших произведениях. И впоследствии он отзывался на важнейшие события политической жизни — протестует против вооруженной агрессии США в Гватемале, выступает против расовой дискриминации и т. д. Когда после осуждения вмешательства США во внутренние дела Гватемалы чисто слушателей на занятиях по литературному мастерству увеличилось, он не без основания сделал вывод, что семинар был «укреплен» осведомителями ФБР, готовыми уличить его в крамоле и потрясении основ...

В 1952—1953 годах он начинает работу над большим автобиографическим произведением по военным воспоминаниям, но откладывает, так и не завершив. Фрагмент под названием «Тюльпан» увидел свет в антологии его «малой прозы», составленной уже после его смерти Иллан Хеллман.

С середины 50-х годов здоровье Хемметта стремительно ухудшается, нарастает одиночество. Писать, как прежде, переписывая самого себя, не хочется, на поиск новых путей уже нет сил... 10 января 1961 года Дэшил Хемметт умирает в одной из больниц Нью-Йорка. Еще через три дня его хоронят на Арлингтонском Национальном кладбище. Со смертью писателя не заканчиваются его отношения с ФБР. То, что «смутьян», «красный» был похоронен в таком престижном месте, вызвало в ФБР самый настоящий переполох. Агенты ФБР посетили кладбище,

чтобы убедиться, что это не ошибка и не газетная утка. В архивах ФБР сохранился циркуляр, в котором рекомендовалось начать кампанию в прессе против того, чтобы «человек, принадлежавший к организации, подрывавшей основы нынешнего государственного устройства, поконил рядом с теми, кто трудился во имя упрочения существующей социально-политической системы»<sup>1</sup>.

В многочисленных «романах о преступлении», выбрасываемых на сегодняшний американский рынок миллионными тиражами, отважные одиночки лихо расправляются с гангстерами, мафиози, продажными полицейскими и в конце концов приводят мир в порядок. В действительности дело обстоит куда мрачнее, и не всегда вымыслу удастся угнаться за реальностью по части кровавых сюжетов. По мнению специалистов, США давно и безнадежно проиграли войну с преступностью, ибо не сумели справиться с теми социальными явлениями и процессами, что ее порождают. Тем настоятельнее нужна в трезвом анализе того кризисного положения, в котором оказалась теперь Америка. В связи с этим нельзя не отметить один знаменательный факт литературно-общественной жизни США. В 1984 году скончалась Лиллан Хеллман. Согласно завещанию писательницы, часть ее состояния передана фонду помощи литераторам, разделяющим марксистские убеждения. Этот фонд будет носить имя Дэшила Хемметта. Доверенным лицам при распределении средств рекомендовано руководствоваться «политическими, социальными и экономическими убеждениями покойного Дэшила Хемметта, который верил в доктрины Карла Маркса».

Создание такого фонда свидетельствует о том, что не только живы книги Хемметта, но и не прерывается традиция марксистской мысли в США, изучению и пропаганде которой писатель отдал многие годы жизни.

*Г. Анджапаридзе*

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<sup>1</sup> Цит. по: R. Layman, *The Shadow Man. The Life and Work of Dashiell Hammett*, N. U., 1981, p. 221.

# КОММЕНТАРИИ



Один из основателей школы «жестокого», или «крутого», детектива Д. Хемметт вошел в историю американской литературы и как тонкий стилист. Хемметт мастерски изображает особенности речи своих персонажей. Он детально передает жаргонную речь преступников, профессионализмы полицейских, воспроизводит речевую атмосферу США конца 20 — начала 30-х годов.

Особую проблему представляет собой сленг. Сленг еще окончательно не определен как лексическая категория. Существуют различные и часто противоречащие друг другу взгляды на место сленга в лексической системе английского языка. В отечественном языкознании наиболее развернутое определение сленга сделано В. А. Хомяковым. Сленг — это «особый периферийный лексический пласт, лежащий как вне пределов литературной речи, так и вне границ диалектов общенационального языка, включающий в себя, с одной стороны, слой специфической лексики и фразеологии профессиональных говоров, социальных жаргонов и аргос преступного мира и, с другой, слой широко распространенной и общепонятной эмоционально-экспрессивной лексики и фразеологии нелитературной речи». («О термине «сленг»: Из истории вопроса. — Уч. зап. Ленинградского гос. пед. ин-та им. А. И. Герцена, т. 352, с. 76). Как понятие, сленг распадается на общий сленг и специальный сленг. Под первым понимается «относительно устойчивый для определенного периода, широко распространенный и общепонятный слой лексики в среде живой разговорной речи, имеющий ярко выраженный эмоционально-экспрессивный оценочный характер, представляющий собой часто протест-насмешку против социальных, этических, эстетических, языковых и других условностей и авторитетов» (там же, с. 77). Сленг рассматривают в психологическом аспекте как продукт «духовного» творчества (в том числе и индивидуального) представителей различных социальных и профессиональных группировок, выражающего определенный «дух»

и «ступень сознания» людей, которые принадлежат к той или иной общественной среде. Каждая такая группировка имеет свой так называемый «специальный сленг», который представляет трудности при понимании для людей, не посвященных в «механику» деятельности данной группы. «Общий сленг» обычно употребляется в разговорах друзей, людей, близких друг другу, в атмосфере интимности и шутливости. «Специальный сленг» принадлежит сфере «деятельности» той или иной социальной группировки.

При составлении комментариев не делалось попыток (да это и не всегда возможно) во всех случаях провести четкую грань между «общим» и «специальным» сленгом. Сленг очень подвижен. Лексические и фразеологические единицы «специального» сленга легко входят в «общий» сленг, а из «общего» сленга могут попасть в пласт разговорной литературной речи.

Стилистическое маркирование, даваемое словарями, далеко не всегда сходится во мнениях о статусе той или иной лексической единицы. Проводя стилистическое маркирование в данных комментариях, мы во многом опирались на Словарь американского сленга *Dictionary of American Slang*. Compiled by H. Wentworth and S. B. Flexner. N.Y., 1975. и *Webster's New International Dictionary*. Second Edition. Springfield, 1949.

Помещенные в данном сборнике произведения Д. Хемметта практически свободны от показа фонетических особенностей нелитературной речи персонажей. Встречаются лишь единичные явления типа:

1. Диереза (утрата словом звука или слога в результате ассимиляции или диссимиляции):

(а) в начале слова 'em = them; so's = so as;

(б) в середине слова din't = didn't;

(в) в конце слова whe' = when.

2. Сокращение словосочетаний в быстрой небрежной речи, например, gimme = give me.

Нелитературная речь героев Хемметта изобилует примерами употребления форм, расходящихся с грамматической нормой (морфологической и синтаксической):

1. Опускание вспомогательного глагола: Have to play it that way?; been up all night?; they still waking?; anything happen?

2. Опускание подлежащего: Be back in a minute — I'll be back in a minute. Looks like waste of time — It looks like waste of time.

3. Употребление универсального ain't: Ain't (= are) you getting up in the world? Wynant ain't (= hasn't) called up? That ain't (= isn't) the point. We ain't (= haven't) been seeing you much lately. He ain't (= isn't) registered there.

4. Опускание предлога: far as I know = as far as I know.

5. Особые формы местоимений: hisself = himself.

6. Двойное или тройное отрицание: So you don't have to worry none; throughout Flin't guardianship nobody hadn't touched nothing.

7. Неправильное употребление форм глагола: throwed = threw.

8. Замена причастия инфинитивом: How's it go to-day = How is it going today.

9. Использование так называемого "glottal stop" вместо вспомогательного is: She' the only one the woman saw. How' the patient.

10. Использование так называемого расщепленного инфинитива: to even guess.

11. Употребление в Continuous глаголов, традиционно не употребляемых в продолженных временах: I'm wanting; we ain't been seeing you.

12. Замена doesn't формой don't: it don't look so damned good; what don't; Macauley don't get to the Plaza.

13. Употребление was(n't) вместо were(n't): They was just playing. I suppose you wasn't. You wasn't hiding. was you.

14. Употребление Present Indefinite вместо Present Perfect: It's a long time I don't see you.

15. Употребление like вместо as: I did lead like I said.

Отдельно не комментируются различные варианты написания слов: gray = grey, pyjamas = pajamas, judgement = judgment.

### The Glass Key

6. Uhn! — междометие, выражающее утверждение, согласие или удовольствие.

Shoot two bits (прост.) — Выкладывай две (по двадцать пять).

Get on him — эд. Продолжайте с ним игру.

'Lo (разг.) = Hello.

china-blue — зеленовато-голубые.



7. I'll put it to him as hot as I can — *зд.* Уж я ему скажу! (*hot* подчеркивает энергичность высказывания).

in a tough spot — *зд.* в затруднительном положении.

green-dappled — *зд.* с зелеными крапинками.

China Street — Китайская улица. Наиболее известны китайские районы (Chinatown) в Нью-Йорке и Сан-Франциско. В Нью-Йорке это ряд улиц в нижней части Манхэттана. Там имеются магазинчики сувениров, рестораны с китайской кухней, телефонные будки в форме пагод.

featured — *зд.* как компонент сложных слов, т. е. «имеющий такие-то черты лица».

8. Peewee (*амер. разг.*) — *зд.* Чуть-чуть.

Peggy O'Toole, Incinerator — клички лошадей.

when you hit one of these sour streaks (*разг.*) — *зд.* когда наступает эта полоса неудач.

spreads it out — *зд.* только растягивает их.

on the nose (*сленг*) — точно вовремя.

9. at that — при всем том, к тому же.

birthday doings — *зд.* празднование дня рождения.

10. make the grade — добиться успеха.

11. you throw an ing-bing (*сленг*) — ты выкидываешь фокус.

...got her hooks into you? (*сленг*) — ...заарканилз тебя?

your pound of flesh — аллюзия на шекспировскую пьесу «Венецианский купец» (1596), где ростовщик Шейлок требует у купца Антонио в случае неуплаты долга «фунт вашего прекраснейшего мяса» (I, 3; перевод Т. Щепкиной-Куперник).

12. yegg (*сленг*) — грабитель сейфов; считают, что данный сленгизм образован по имени Джона Йегга, первого взломщика сейфов, применившего нитроглицерин.

the Post — название вымышленной газеты.

to sew one's shirt on — не терять головы, сохранять присутствие духа (ср. to keep one's shirt on — не спешить, не волноваться).

none of the rules apply — *зд.* с тобой нечего церемониться.

13. to spring (*сленг*) — освободить.

stand trial — *зд.* предстать перед судом.

up for — *зд.* нацелившиеся.

would be jumping in the lake (*разг.*) — *зд.* было бы лучше утопиться.

14. Anything to make it tougher — *зд.* Час от часу не легче.

to go over big (*сленг*) — иметь успех.

put in with — *зд.* войти в контакт.

15. no can do (*сленг*) — ничего нельзя сделать.

nothing stirring — *зд.* никакой деятельности. ср.: no can do.

a tough break — *зд.* серьезная неудача.

that's white of him (*сленг*) — порядочно с его стороны.

the Log Cabin Club — клуб «Бревенчатый домик»; достаточно популярное название для американского клуба, где встречаются представители политических и деловых кругов; ассоциируется с предвыборной президентской кампанией 1840 г. У. Г. Гаррисона, выдававшего себя за «человека из народа».

16. half-trot — *зд.* почти бегом, «рысью».

you had Peggy O'Toole today — ты сегодня выиграл, поставив на Пегги О'Тул.

to be set for a game — *зд.* быть готовым к игре.

18. to the effect — с целью.

20. a few months out of her teens — *буке.* несколько месяцев, как ей пошел 20-й год.

crummy (*сленг*) — жалкий.

Miss Jesus — *зд.* праведница.

He's taken a run-out on me — Он сбежал от меня.

22. to come across (*разг.*) — расплатиться.

blow (*сленг*) — скрыться, «слинять».

markers (*сленг*) — долговые расписки с надписью IOU. (по созвучию с I owe you).

What are you up to now? — Что вы замышляете?

24. scrape up (*сленг*) — *зд.* соберет, подаст, найдет.

blew town (*сленг*) — сбежал из города.

25. a buzzer (*жарг.*) — полицейский значок.

a jam (*жарг.*) — тюрьма.

What's got you all steamed up? (*разг.*) — Что тебя так рассердило?

something was itching you — *зд.* что-то тебя беспокоило.

**welshed on** (жарг.) — зд. не возвратили долга за игру.  
**that gets me down** (разг.) — это меня раздражает.  
**cop** (сленг) — выигрываю.

**I can take my tail out from between my legs** — зд. я опять на коне, чувствую себя человеком. Ср.: **with one's tail between one's legs** — понимая свое поражение, с чувством полного унижения.

**It's getting me licked** (разг.) — зд. Это меня убивает.

**this guy takes a Mickey Finn on me** (сленг) — Этот парень обводит меня вокруг пальца (букв. а Mickey Finn, или а Mickey, алкогольный напиток, в который добавлено сильно действующее наркотическое или слабительное средство. Первоначально означало слабительные таблетки для лошадей).

**26. won't be poking his nose in** — зд. вмешиваться, лезть в чужие дела.

**pop in** (разг.) — зд. зайти.

**Oke** = O.K.; существует также написание Okay и Okeh.

**27. snip** (фамильярно) — малыш.

**youngster** — зд. малютка.

**baby-eyed** — зд. наивными глазами.

**Hard of mouth and eye** — зд. С суровым взглядом и без улыбки.

**28. Righto** (разг.) = Right.

**30. Grand Central Terminal** — Большой Центральный вокзал в Нью-Йорке. Число пассажиров, проходящих ежегодно через этот вокзал, превышает численность населения Соединенных Штатов.

**off Broadway** — находящийся недалеко от Бродвея.

**Madison Avenue** — Мэдисон-авеню, одна из главных улиц Нью-Йорка, находится в центральной части Манхаттана, между Парк-авеню и Пятой авеню.

**31. telephone-memorandum-slips** — листки для записи телефонограмм.

**the Gargoyle** — название гостиницы.

**at Tom & Jerry's** — название кафе.

**the Matin** — название гостиницы.

**E. 30th** — 30-ая улица Ист-Сайда (East Side) в Нью-Йорке.

**speaky** (сленг) = speakeasy (амер. разг.) — бар, где незаконно торгуют спиртными напитками.

33. **Rickey** — коктейль из сока лайма (разновидности лимона), выжатого в алкогольный напиток с добавлением газированной воды.

**batonwise** — *эд.* в такт, т. е. подобно дирижерской палочке.

34. **Cut to nothing** (*сленг*) — Очень сильно разбавлено.  
**loose-jointed** — *эд.* нетвердой походкой.

**Greenwich Village** — Гринвич-Виллидж (район Манхаттана), считается районом богемы, где живут художники, писатели, поэты. Этот район тянется от Западной Хьюстон-стрит до 14-ой улицы в западной части Манхаттана и от реки Гудзон до Бродвея. «Богемный» характер района Гринвич-Виллидж определяется скорее традицией, чем современным составом его населения: сейчас здесь в основном живут служащие различных компаний.

35. **Like hell you will** (*разг.*) — Черта с два! (*like hell* выполняет роль эмфатического отрицания (ср.: *He is a good man — Like hell he is*).

**Yoo-hoo** — восклицание для привлечения внимания кого-либо; ср.: Эй, Нед.

36. **Washington Square** — площадь Вашингтон-сквер в Нью-Йорке, расположена в южной части Манхаттана; к ней примыкает Гринвич-Виллидж (см. коммент. к с. 34) и китайский квартал Чайнатаун (см. коммент. к с. 7). Летом на этой площади и прилегающих улицах проводятся выставки картин под открытым небом. На площади установлена арка в честь Вашингтона, здесь же находятся корпуса Нью-Йоркского университета.

37. **Murad** — название сигарет (по свидетельству биографов Хемметта, марка, которой он одно время отдавал предпочтение).

**a paper of matches** — спички в плоской картонной упаковке.

38. **took a plant** (*сленг*) — спрятался в укромном местечке, чтобы понаблюдать.

**the Buckman** — название гостиницы.

**holing up** (*сленг*) — *эд.* место, где скрывается.

**knocked off** (*сленг*) — бросил.

39. **Unkdray** — пьяный, пример т. н. **Pig Latin**, т. е. ломаного языка, популярного детского зашифрованного

языка, где первая буква (или буквы) переносится на конец слова и к нему добавляется бессмысленный слог (зд. -ау).

40. **Come on in** (разг.) — Входите.

41. **punking around** (сленг, груб.) — зд. помогался.

**dope** (сленг) — секретная информация.

**a dumb cluck** (сленг) — дура(к), идиот(ка).

42. **drop the shuck on me** (сленг) — зд. опорочат меня.

**the lead-in** — начало.

**Nuts!** (сленг) — Чепуха!

**Let's chuck this sap out on his can** (сленг) — Давай вышибем этого сосунка отсюда.

43. **They're sliding out** (сленг) — Они смываются.

44. **glancing blow** — зд. скользящий удар.

45. **make them good** (сленг) — зд. заплатить по ним.

**to beat** — зд. ставить в тупик.

46. **to set you on the hot seat** — зд. отправить на электрический стул.

**I'm fixed** (амер.) — зд. я готов, я могу, я в состоянии.

**rocks** (сленг) — «камешки», драгоценности.

47. **questioning** — зд. допрос.

**train-shed** (амер.) — часть крыши железнодорожной станции, которая покрывает пути и платформы.

51. **took the run-out** (сленг) — скрылся, «слинял».

**came in in front** — зд. выиграла, опередила (всех остальных).

**take a crack** (сленг) — совершить нападение.

52. **I'm pushing my snoot** — я сую свой нос.

54. **goes blooeey** (сленг) — разваливается, не выдерживает критики.

56. **go kind of easy** (разг.) — полегче, поосторожнее.

58. **the Angelus** (церк.) — молитва к пресвятой богородице (у католиков).

59. **Howdy** (разг.) = **How do you do.**

**Salem and Chestnut** — название фирмы.

60. **the rap** (сленг) — опознание.

**What are you getting at?** — зд. На что ты намекаешь?

61. Cut it out (разг.) — Брось.  
spill it (разг.) — зд. выкладывай.  
to get fixed up — чтобы его устроили.

62. to knock loose — зд. вышвырнуть.  
the Dog House and Paradise Gardens — названия баров.  
smack them over (сленг) — прихлопнуть.

Prohibition-enforcement — усиление мер по запрещению продажи спиртных напитков. Термин относится к периоду с 1919 по 1933 г., когда в соответствии с 18-ой поправкой к Конституции в США был введен федеральный «сухой закон». Несмотря на интенсивные экономические санкции против нарушителей, скоро стало очевидно, что данный закон в целом проводился в жизнь весьма формально и не препятствовал росту коррупции. Особое развитие получили незаконное производство и продажа спиртных напитков. Федеральный «сухой закон» был отменен в 1933 г. (в некоторых штатах существовал до 1966 г.).

a cyclone shot — «направленный взрыв» (используется в технологических целях).

come-along (сленг) — специальное приспособление в виде квадратной стальной пластины с особым вырезом для взламывания сейфов.

63. Aw, nuts (диал. сленг) = Oh, nuts — чепуха. Возможны также написания nerts, nertz.

64. by a hell of a sight (разг.) — на целую уйму.

we're not on Easy Street yet, but she's shaping up (сленг) — это еще не полный успех, но кое-чего мы все-таки достигли.

66. If you make it mean killing — Если вам удастся сделать так, чтобы это означало убийство.

I'm too big to take the boot (сленг) — Я слишком развернулся, чтобы принять отставку.

67. to take it laying down (разг.) — принять (то, что было сделано или сказано с намерением принести вред) без возражения или жалобы.

uncrossed his legs — зд. снял одну ногу с другой.

slam it down (сленг) — зд. прикрой его (притон).

69. This is a hell of a time (разг.) — зд. ужасное время (a hell of + сущ. с неопред. артиклем — эмфатическая конструкция; ср.: a hell of a girl).

**seidel** — большая пивная кружка, иногда с крышкой на пружине.

**pretzel** (нем., амер.) — сухой кренделек, посыпанный солью.

**70. kick** — зд. возражение, жалоба.

**play the long shot** (сленг) — будет стараться изо всех сил.

**to've laid down to him** — пожертвовать собой ради него.

**You shouldn't have got him with his back to the wall** (разг.) — Не следовало припирать его к стенке.

**in the old Fifth** — Имеется в виду Пятая авеню, наиболее фешиенбельная улица Нью-Йорка в центральной части Манхэттана, где находятся самые дорогие магазины и роскошные жилые дома. Пятая авеню стала символом богатства, элегантности и блеска.

**72. I ought to knock hell out of you** (разг.) — зд. Мне следует хорошенько тебя отделать.

**73. dump** (сленг) — притон, «малина».

**What's all the keysters for?** (жарг.) — А это что за фигура? **Keyster** или **keister** = **buttocks**.

**a ducat** (жарг.) — пропуск, входной (проездной) билет.

**75. having it out** — зд. уладили дело.

**dough-heavy** (сленг) — имеет много денег (heavy как элемент сложного слова указывает на большое количество чего-либо).

**in chunks** — значительными суммами.

**76. affair** — зд. вещь.

**77. we're quits** — мы в расчете.

**78. That's an if offer** — зд. Это весьма условное предложение.

**You're not so God-damned hot for putting in with me** — зд. Вы не очень-то жаждете объединиться со мной.

**79. house-offer** — зд. предложение фирмы.

**the Observer** — название газеты.

**the how and why** (разг.) — всевозможные как и почему.

**to keep from raising a stink** (разг.) — чтобы избежать скандала.

**That's out** — Это исключается.

the County Clerk — секретарь округа (в США); официальное лицо, занимающееся судебными делами, вопросами просвещения и т. п.

on tap (разг.) — готово для рассмотрения, готово к действию.

80. The thanks go both ways — *зд.* Взаимно!

81. hell-bent (сленг) — *зд.* решительно настроен.

to pick on (разг.) — обвинять, придираться.

grow big — *зд.* важничать.

to buck him (амер.) — выступать против кого-либо.

shot — *зд.* взрыв.

hang on to it — *зд.* придержать их (деньги).

to knock off — *зд.* убрать, убить.

82. You know where you can stick it (груб.) — Засунь их знаешь куда!

84. Houdini — Гарри Гудини (1874—1926), наст. имя Эрик Вайсс, американский фокусник-трюкач; славился тем, что мог выбраться из-под воды со связанными цепью ногами или из наглухо закрытого ящика.

85. That'll have him up and singing in no time — *зд.* От этого он живо очнется и будет «как огурчик».

Rip Van Winkle — Рип Ван Винкль, герой одноименной новеллы американского писателя-романтика Вашингтона Ирвинга (1786—1856), проспавший двадцать лет.

86. uttered a thick "Yes" — произнес «да» хриплым голосом.

I'll have you worked on — *зд.* Тобой как следует займусь.

scooped up — *зд.* подхватил.

He's throwed another joe — Он выкинул еще одну штуку; joe является сокращенным вариантом сленгизма Joe Miller — «штука».

87. a rip (жарг.) — штука.

Always up to some kind of tricks — все время что-то замышляешь.

stay put awhile — *зд.* полежи-ка.

mugs (сленг) — парни.

88. to wad — *зд.* комкать.

tick and all — чехол матраса и все остальное.



89. **muffler-fashion** — *зд.* наподобие шарфа.

90. **Hartford six one one six** — Герой называет номер телефона.

91. **passed out cold** (*сленг*) — напроочь вырубился, потерял сознание.

**say-so** (*разг.*) — утверждение.

**They had you** — *зд.* Они тебя сцапали.

**he out-trapped me** — *зд.* он сам поймал меня в ловушку.

92. **roto, roto-sections** — ротогравюры; отделы иллюстраций в газетах и журналах.

93. **M'Laughlin** — MacLaughlin (фамилия).

94. **The dirt** (*сленг*) — сплетня.

**keeping their hands off the murder** — *зд.* медлят с расследованием убийства.

95. **You can't go by my manners** — Нельзя судить по моим манерам.

**gaucherie** (*фр.*) — неуклюжесть, грубоватость.

97. **Not that I know of** — *зд.* Насколько мне известно, нет.

**on the qt** (*разг.*) = **on the quiet** — по секрету, тихо.

98. **gunk** (*сленг*) — еда.

99. **loose ends of things** (*разг.*) — вещи, которые надлежит сделать в самом ближайшем будущем.

104. **Little Lost Lady** — популярная мелодия тех лет.

106. **ogling me like a Cheshire cat** — ср. с идиомой **to grin like a Cheshire cat**, т. е. улыбаться во весь рот; *зд.* — глазеть, таращиться изо всех сил. Чеширский Кот — персонаж из «Алисы в Стране чудес» английского писателя Льюиса Кэрролла (1832—1898); обладал даром постепенного исчезновения, причем последней исчезала его улыбка.

108. **a ten-spot** (*сленг*) — десятидолларовая купюра.

**pumped** (*разг.*) — внимательно и тщательно допросил.

**turn up** — *зд.* раскопал.

111. **on the quiet** — См. коммент. к с. 97.

112. **come to think of it** — *зд.* если вдуматься.

114. **once-white** — который когда-то был белым.

**Kind of weatherish tonight** (разг.) — Ну и погода сегодня!

**an iron** (сленг) — автомобиль.

**Lucky for you you could pick your night** — эд. Ничего себе ночьку вы выбрали.

118. **assault-rap** — ответственность за нападение.

120. **to make up for** — восполнять, возмещать, наверстывать.

**what they're all eating their hearts out about** (разг.) — Что их так особенно печалит; **to eat или tear one's heart out** обычно говорится о влюбленных, здесь употреблено иронически.

121. **the State Central** — название банка.

122. **He's getting her off** — эд. Он отправляет ее.

**stack up** (разг.) — обстоят.

123. **Through?** — Все? Кончил?

**to hang a big one on you** (амер.) — нанести тебе сильный удар.

126. **blinking sleep out of his swollen eyes** — эд. моргал, чтобы прогнать сон из своих опухших глаз.

**Finis** (лат.) — Конец.

129. **retraced his steps** — эд. вернулся.

135. **Judith herself** (библ.) — Юдифь, вдова Манассей, отрубившая мечом голову Олоферну, вождю ассирийского войска.

138. **stud poker** — разновидность покера, когда каждому игроку сдают пять карт, первую рубашкой вверх, а остальные рубашкой вниз. Ставки делаются по открытым картам (иногда в другом варианте игры сдается по семь карт, причем первые две и последние две сдаются рубашкой вверх).

142. **How could I help knowing** — Как я могла не знать.

143. **slumped farther down** — эд. тяжело осел.

**I'm that** — Я им и остаюсь.

144. **Lord Byron, Pipe-organ** — клички лошадей.

145. **the Hall** = the Hall of Justice — суд, здание суда.  
**was pooped** (уст. сленг) — убит.

146. **till it kind of blows over** (разг.) — до тех пор, пока все не уляжется.

147. **a soft job** (сленг) — легкая работа.

148. **you're up against** — зд. с чем ты столкнулся.

**hold out anything on you** — утаивать что-либо от тебя.

149. **lumpy** — зд. угрюмый.

**the kiss-off** (сленг) — конец, провал.

150. **had him lined up** — я заполучил его.

**going shifty on us** (сленг) — собирается изменить нам.

**to sing them** (сленг) — сообщить.

152. **to cross you up** — обмануть.

**digging into the killing** (разг.) — расследует убийство.

**to stall me on** — зд. уйти от разговора со мной.

**dummied up on me** (сленг) — отказался сообщить мне что-либо.

**jump through hoops** (сленг) — носиться, бегать по моей команде.

**it's a pipe** (сленг) — наверняка.

**to drop in on** (разг.) — неожиданно зайти (к).

153. **he's knifing me** (сленг) — ведет дело против меня.

**Stalled him** (сленг) — зд. убеждал его не предпринимать решительных действий.

**monkey** (сленг) — человек, «тип».

154. **Lay off** (сленг) — Брось, отвяжись.

155. **gummed things up** (сленг) — испортил, допустив оплошность.

**you heel** (сленг) — ты, дрянь.

**slouched down** — зд. сел сутулясь.

**black-shod** — зд. обутое в черные башмаки.

158. **stacks up** (разг.) — идет само собой, развивается.

**to rig** (сленг) — устроить, уладить.

**that's out for the time being** (разг.) — пока это невозможно.

159. **dispiritedly** — уныло.

160. his face pinched — с осунувшимся лицом.

Manhattan — коктейль «Манхаттан»; готовится из виски и сладкого вермута, обычно с небольшим количеством горькой настойки.

161. She gets called a lot of things — *зд.* Ее называют по-разному.

The-uh-little lady — *зд.* эта, ах да, малютка.

a silver fizz — «серебряная шипучка», коктейль из алкогольного напитка (джина, бренди и т. п.), газированной воды, лимонного сока, яичного белка, подслащенный и охлажденный.

162. a minute steak — тонкий кусок вырезки, иногда нарезанный кубиками, приготовляемый очень быстро.

Roquefort dressing — приправа с добавлением сыра «Рокфор».

to hock your pretties (*сленг*) — заложить твои безделушки.

gypped me out of (*сленг*) — выманил у меня.

breaks (*сленг*) — удачи.

167. go up in the air and explode the works (*сленг*) — потеряет над собой контроль и испортит все на свете.

169. on the chutes (*диал.*) — струсил.

to ditch him (*сленг*) — бросить его.

I don't want in on that racket (*разг.*) = I don't want to be (to take part) in that racket.

give him a bump (*разг.*) — *зд.* потревожит его разок.

making it stick — довести дело до конца.

they knocked his place over (*сленг*) — они совершили налет на его дом.

to lay low (*сленг*) — затаиться до времени.

172. blind Christ (*груб.*) — восклицание удивления.

Sock-me-again Beaumont — *зд.* Бомонт по кличке «Врежь мне еще разок».

skinned a knuckle on — *зд.* об кого я разбивал свою руку.

173. massacrism — душегуб; *зд.* ирон. жертва резни.

That ain't a dumb idea (*сленг*) — Не глупая идея.

174. joint (*сленг*) — заведение.

175. A young middle-aged man — Моложавый человек средних лет.

176. **Have it your way** — Пусть будет по-твоему.  
**turn me up** (сленг) — выдать меня полиции.  
**fry** (сленг) — отправят на электрический стул.  
**Maybe hell!** — эд. Может быть, черт побери!

177. **would let you take the fall** (сленг) — допустил бы твой арест.

178. **smoked** (сленг) — «под газом», пьяный.  
**roscoe** (сленг) — пистолет (обычно говорится об оружии, которое легко спрятать на себе).  
**give him the works** (сленг) — эд. убить.

179. **That's keno** — восклицание согласия, удовлетворения.

**Let's screw** (сленг) — Скроемся.  
**beat it** (сленг) — проваливай.  
**a murder-rap** (сленг) — обвинение в убийстве (ср.: assault-rap).

180. **sap** (сленг) — дурак, идиот.  
**I don't mind plugging you** (сленг) — Я запросто могу тебя пристрелить.

**half-smart** (сленг) — какой ловкий! Half обычно усиливает корневое слово, употребляется иронически.  
**you made the break** — эд. ты допустил ошибку.  
**one of my hang-outs** (сленг) — одна из моих «малин».  
**to pull a fast one here** (сленг) — выкинуть трюк.  
**a rub-out** (сленг) — убийство.

181. **a fat chance** (сленг) — эд. нет никакой возможности, совсем мало вероятности.

**a tough break for the house** (сленг) — серьезная неудача для этого заведения.

**pipe down** (сленг) — хватит болтать.  
**to play it that way** — поступать именно так.

186. **to fly off the handle** (разг.) — очень рассердиться.

187. **sh-h-hed her into silence** — эд. заставил ее замолчать.

191. **what let's do** (разг.) = what we'll do.

193. **to make a clean breast of it** — чистосердечно во всем признаться.

**gaudied up** — эд. громко сказано, приукрашено.

194. **don't hold that against you** — я не виню тебя за это.

**to twine** — *зд.* сложить.

**the grand-old-man-avenging-the-death-the-law-couldn't-avenge line** — *зд.* линия поведения, при которой знатный пожилой господин мстит за смерть там, где не мог отомстить закон.

**to stay dummied up** (*сленг*) — *зд.* отказываться от сообщения информации или секрета.

196. **that goes for all of us** — *зд.* это относится ко всем нам.

198. **stay put** — *зд.* останется, т. е. продолжит деятельность, как было определено.

199. **Stick it out with me** — *зд.* Помиришься со мной.

**I'll do my damndest** — я сделаю все, что от меня зависит.

## THE THIN MAN

202. **powder-blue** — бледноголубая.

**carryings on** (*разг.*) — дикие, экстравагантные выходки.

203. **raise hell** (*разг.*) — поднять шум.

**Riverside Drive** — Риверсайд-драйв, улица вблизи Риверсайд-парка в Нью-Йорке, расположенного вдоль р. Гудзон.

**the Singer Building** — «Дом Зингера» (по имени изобретателя швейной машины Исаака Мерритта Зингера (1811—1878), административное здание с различными конторами и учреждениями.

**Lord & Taylor's** — «Лорд энд Тэйлор», большой магазин в Нью-Йорке, широко известен своими отделами готового платья.

**scared a fat woman silly** — испугала до обморока одну полную женщину.

**Saks'** — «Сакс», универсальный магазин в Нью-Йорке.

**screwy** (*сленг*) — «с приветом», сумасшедший.

**the Courtland** — название гостиницы.

**the Normandie** — название гостиницы.

204. **You got types?** — У вас есть любимые типы?

**French etchings** — Обещание показать гравюры находится в американской традиции этикета ухаживания.

205. **On the level** (сленг) — Честно и откровенно.

206. **I felt pretty low** (разг.) — я чувствовал себя довольно паршиво.

**a slug of whis** (сленг) — эд. глоток виски.

**bullet-riddled** — эд. изрешеченное пулями.

207. **to cut the phlegm** (шутл.) — разогнать хандру.

208. **brindle mustache** — рыжевато-коричневые усы с проседью.

209. **Come on over** (разг.) — Заходи.

**Rise and Shine** — популярная песня 20—начала 30-х годов.

**Walk out on them** (разг.) — Уйти от них.

211. **Used to bounce it on my knee** — эд. Бывало, качал ее на колене.

**the Lindb...** = the Lindbergh baby case — Имеется в виду суд в 1932 г. над Бруно Гауптманом, который похитил и убил малолетнего сына Чарльза Линдберга (1902—1974), американского летчика, совершившего первый беспосадочный перелет из Нью-Йорка в Париж в 1927 г.; Гауптман был казнен в 1936 г.

213. **stick to** — эд. ограничат себя.

**an old fuff** (сленг) — эд. зануда, скучный человек.

**What are you holding out on me?** (разг.) — Что ты от меня скрываешь?

214. **Where'd you get the snoutful?** (сленг) — Где это ты так набралась?

215. **tuck her in** (сленг) — уложил ее спать.

218. **the booby-hatch** (сленг) — сумасшедший дом.

220. **the mugg** (сленг) — человек, парень.

**Ellis Island** — остров Эллис-Айленд, район Нью-Йорка, где в 1892 г. был организован иммиграционный пункт. По статистике около 20 миллионов иммигрантов прошли через Эллис-Айленд за последующие 50 лет.

222. **on the cuff** (сленг) — без подготовки, экспромтом  
**Reuben's** — название кафе.

223. We were washed up (сленг) — Мы расстались.  
she was always on the up and up with me (сленг) — она  
всегда была со мной честна и откровенна.

the law (разг.) — полиция.

to pin on me (сленг) — пришить мне.

224. blackjack (сленг) — полицейская дубинка.

That makes it your party (разг.) — Теперь ты здесь  
хозяин.

225. nippers (сленг) — наручники.

just for the fun of it — смеху ради; просто так.

you didn't have to knock me cold — зачем ты меня оглу-  
шил!

there's a woman with hair on her chest — зд. бой-баба,  
баба-огонь.

scooped out a gutter — зд. сделала выемку.

Mack (разг.) — парень.

226. a wisp of a man — зд. жалкий человечек.

Sullivan Act — возможно, что здесь имеет-  
ся в виду Джон Л. Салливан (1858—1918), американский  
боксер-тяжеловес, который добился особой славы в 1882 г.  
Его спортивная карьера закончилась в 1892 г., когда его  
победил Джим Корбетт (после 21 раунда). Салливан  
жестoko избивал своих соперников до бесчувственного  
состояния; в такие моменты обычно вмешивалась  
полиция. Существовал сленгизм Sullivanize  
— «разбивать наголову».

227. except on a doctor's say-so — разве что по совету  
доктора.

228. I went easy — зд. Я свободно действовал.

a fat lot (разг., ирон.) — масса.

gone nuts (сленг) — спятил.

230. Take it easy — не волнуйся, не принимай близко  
к сердцу, проще смотри на вещи.

232. chewing-gum (сленг) — неполная, запутанная ин-  
формация, лицемерная болтовня.

233. was hurrying into my clothes — зд. поспешно оде-  
валась.

236. it's got her doing figure eights — тут она начала  
вилять.



even if you will have to take pot luck with us tonight — *зд.* даже если вам придется поужинать сегодня с нами, «чем бог послал». Pot luck — еда, состоящая из того, что осталось от обеда, в переносном значении это такая еда, которую «по случаю кто-либо находит в горшочке» — in the pot.

238. Bach — Иоганн Себастьян Бах (1685—1750).

239. mopery (*сленг*) — любое другое немислимое преступление.

240. you talked yourself out of a dinner — *зд.* из-за своего длинного языка ты остался без обеда.

Max's — название ресторана.

Childs' — название магазина.

241. Philly (*сленг*) — Филадельфия.

242. I was walking beat (*сленг*) — я патрулировал.

243. to take the time — потратить часть времени, сделать усилие.

being in cahoots — *зд.* действовать заодно.

along about — *зд.* где-то около.

244. thou (*сленг*) = thousand.

246. I'd just as lief ask you — *зд.* С таким же успехом я бы спросил вас.

I'm sitting on the edge of my chair (*разг.*) — Я очень интересуюсь этим (обычно говорится, когда человек взволнован или глубоко заинтересовался тем, что он видит или слышит).

Anyways (*разг.*) = anyway, anyhow.

247. the Plaza — название гостиницы. Plaza — американизм испанского происхождения, широко употребляется в США в значении «площадь».

His business such as what? (*разг.*) = What's his business? (типичная для разговорной речи инверсия).

This is elegant stew (*сленг*) — Это весьма запутанная штука.

on a badger-game charge (*сленг*) — по обвинению в шантаже; badger game — вид шантажа, когда сообщница-женщина соблазняет жертву-мужчину и грозит ему разоблачением связи (так как сообщник-мужчина застает жертву при компрометирующих обстоятельствах).

turned her loose — позволил ей распоряжаться.

She was running around off and on — *зд.* Она время от времени встречалась; to run around (*разг.*) — общаться, часто менять любовников.

248. **Hot-head** (*сленг*) — наркоман, здесь употреблено юмористически, так как в то время это был малоизвестный жаргонизм в отличие от широко употребляемого “junkie”.

Primed to his ears (*сленг*) — Очень сильно пьян.

to knock any holes in Morelli's story (*сленг*) — найти неувязки в версии Морелли.

the Palma — название бара.

Come to think of it — См. коммент. к с. 112.

250. **bust in** (*сленг*) — ворваться, вломиться.

251. **turn himself inside out for you** — вывернуться ради тебя наизнанку.

a line had been x'd and m'd out here — *зд.* строчка была здесь забита буквами “x” и “m”.

252. **to have a completely free hand** — иметь полную свободу действий.

253. **Abner** — Абнер, мужское имя.

**Bunny** — широко употребительное прозвище «Кролик».

254. **to make the pinch** (*сленг*) — арестовать.

**glassine** — пергамин (вид бумаги).

256. **ducking out** — *зд.* убегающий.

257. **a speak** (*сленг*) = a speakeasy.

**dromomania** (*мед.*) — дромомания, психопатологическое нежелание оставаться на одном месте, бесцельное стремление к перемене мест, переездам, бродяжничеству, непреодолимая потребность к скитаниям, как правило, продолжающаяся многие недели и даже месяцы.

had a hand in his coming over here — *зд.* приложил руку к тому, чтобы он пришел сюда.

**Jack Oakie** — Джек Оки (род. 1903 г.), популярный в то время актер-комик.

259. **the Gunnison River** — река Ганнизон (исток в штате Колорадо). Протяженность 150—200 миль, впадает в р. Колорадо, протекает по глубоким каньонам.

**Joe Smith** — Джозеф Смит (1805—1844), основатель секты мормонов.

260. the Rio Grande River — Рио-Гранде (в произношении рифмуется со словом sandy), одна из самых длинных рек в Северной Америке, протяженность 1885 миль.

265. a case of arrested development — *зд.* случай задержанного развития.

266. Radio City Music Hall — мюзик-холл Радио-сити; Радио-сити — название Рокфеллеровского центра (комплекса небоскребов в Нью-Йорке). Центр включает 15 небоскребов между 48-ой и 51-ой улицами, в которых размещаются несколько крупных радиокорпораций, информационное агентство «Ассошиэтед Пресс», редакции крупнейших журналов и пр.

267. He sent me up the river (*сленг*) — Он меня отправил в тюрьму (фразеологизм up the river этимологически связан с тем, что осужденных в Нью-Йорке отправляли в тюрьму Синг-Синг, расположенную выше по реке Гудзон).

led (*сленг*) — *зд.* действовал.

How come you sicked (*сленг*) — Как получилось, что ты натравил. Sick — натравить; to sick является диалектным вариантом глагола to seek — гоняться, нападать (обычно это слово говорится о собаке).

to hang that Wolf dame's killing on him (*сленг*) — пришить ему убийство этой самой Вулф.

to blow his top (*сленг*) — «психануть».

268. I know for a fact he wasn't off his hip (*сленг*) — я точно знаю, что он не уходил от «своей».

No kidding (*разг.*) — без обмана, «кроме шуток».

for weighting her down (*сленг*) — разделаться с ней.

on the stuff (*сленг*) — принимать наркотики.

a rat (*сленг*) — мерзавец; *букв.* осведомитель.

on the make (*сленг*) — увивался.

269. fifty bucks'll get you a hundred — *зд.* держи пари *букв.* ставь один к двум).

a fluke (*сленг*) — неудача.

get the breaks (*сленг*) — добиться успеха.

to gum-shoe (*сленг*) — работать полицейским сыщиком.

to put something over on him (*сленг*) — морочить ему голову.

271. Bergdorf-Goodman's — название магазина.

272. in the Forties — в районе 40-х улиц (в Нью-Йорке).  
Twenty-five'll get you fifty — См. коммент. к с. 269.

273. squirrel cage (сленг) — сумасшедший дом.

274. the Sixth Avenue elevated — надземная железная дорога на Шестой Авеню.

275. rough-house comedy (сленг) — грубая, шумная комедия с громкими криками и дракой.

suck around (сленг) — гоняться, волочить.

to take a poke at him (сленг) — ударить, врезать.

bum (сленг) — зб. не действующий.

276. you never tried to make her? — ты не пытался закрутить с ней роман?

knocking around = knocking about.

277. Shake it up. — Пошевеливайся.

278. The order's out — зб. Ордер на арест имеется.  
before the whistle blows (разг.) — в одно мгновение.

279. Keep your legs crossed (шутл.) = Keep your fingers crossed — надейся на удачу; ср.: «чтобы не сглазить».

282. she came to a little — зб. она мало что сообщила.

284. to stay out — зб. чтобы не попасть в затруднительное положение.

286. Stop heckling me — перестать засыпать меня вопросами.

How could I help it, the way you screamed — зб. Как я мог не слушать, когда ты так истошно вопила.

287. Apts. = Apartments.

288. right away (амер.) — немедленно.

290. Good pickings (ирон.) — Хорошая добыча.

copped the sneak on us (сленг) — удрал от нас.

deader'n hell — зб. наповал.

McIntyre Porcupine, Dome — названия фирм.

291. dido — зб. проказница, шалунья.

dope-fiend — наркоман; слово-суффикс -fiend первоначально означало человека, пристрастившегося к курению или наркотикам, например, cigarette-fiend, но с 40-х

годов широко употреблялось как синоним *crazy for something*, например, *book-fiend*, *jazz-fiend*, *movie-fiend*, *record-fiend* и т. д.

293. **Columbia** — Колумбийский университет в Нью-Йорке. Основан в 1754 г. под названием Королевский колледж. После войны за независимость, в 1784 г., получил название Колумбийского колледжа, а затем — университета.

294. **Me and the French hoard gold** — пронический намек на то, что Франция испытывала серьезный дефицит золотого запаса после первой мировой войны.

**on the bum** (*сленг*) — пустить по миру; ср.: *to go on the bum* — жить за чей-либо счет.

**the skiful** (*разг.*) — выпивка.

295. **was not for that** — не согласилась с этим.

296. **clubby** — дружески.

297. **You'll never talk yourself into any trouble** — ты не попадешь в беду из-за своего языка (т. е. не сболтнешь лишнего).

298. **bat it around** (*разг.*) — обговорим.

**I've seen her places** — *зд.* Я видел ее во многих барах.

299. **blintz** — блин с начинкой (с сыром, фруктами и т. д.).

300. **I got no kick** — *зд.* Я не возражаю.

301. **Old Emily Post Studsy** — старина Стадси, приверженец этикета. Эмили Пост (1873—1960) вела отделы в различных газетах, посвященные правилам этикета; в 1922 г. опубликовала книгу по этому вопросу.

**cracked down on you** (*сленг*) — совершил нападение.

302. **Park Avenue** — Парк-авеню, одна из наиболее фешенебельных улиц Нью-Йорка, где находятся дорогие магазины и роскошные жилые дома, символ богатства, элегантности и блеска.

**he was her bank-roll** (*сленг*) — он финансировал ее.

303. **plenty smart** (*разг.*) = *very smart*.

**smack it out of me** (*жарг.*) — вышибить из меня.

**earysipelas** — искаженное **erysipelas**. Огонь св. Антония, рожистое воспаление, рожа.

**Pull in that lug** — эд. Втяни-ка свое ухо.

**garsong** (искаж. фр.) — гарсон.

**with the boy on your back** — намек на горб официанта.

304. **to glaum** (сленг) — умыкнуть.

**the cop on the beat** (сленг) — полицейский, который делает обход территории.

305. **to rat for** (сленг) — следить за кем-либо, «шпионить». (**rat** — осведомитель).

**the can** (сленг) — уборная.

**mean medicine** (сленг) — поганенькая штука.

**got nailed** (сленг) — попались.

**they give him the business** (сленг) — обращались с ним очень плохо.

**to blow town** (сленг) — См. коммент. к с. 24.

306. **to fall for that song and dance** (разг.) — попасть на удочку, поверить истории (**song and dance**) — возбужденный рассказ о чем-то будто бы важном.

**learned** (вульг.) = **taught**.

**an in** (сленг) — преимущество.

**pull** (сленг) — заработок.

**tap** (сленг) — кража денег, «отъем».

307. **to throw in with** — соединиться.

**cluck** (сленг) — дура (ср.: **dumb cluck**, с. 41).

**tiger milk** (сленг) — выпивка.

**put it to** — предложил.

308. **hustled him out** — вытолкнули.

311. **squawking his head off for a lawyer** — эд. орет до умопомрачения, требуя адвоката.

312. **fleur** (фр.) — цветок.

313. **to put in with you** — вмешиваться в твои дела.

314. **You've got Chris cold** (разг.) — Ты до смерти испугал Криса.

**Sock that to him** (разг.) — эд. Ошарашь его.

317. **He gives me the creeps** — У меня от него мороз по коже.

321. a hock-shop (сленг) — ломбард.

322. riding us for action (сленг) — подгоняет к действию, активности.

No leads on it? — Никаких намеков?

325. baby her — обращаться как с ребенком, баловать.

328. ironing (сленг) — ездил на машине.

spit it out — выкладывай.

331. threw a couple of jobs my way — подбросил мне пару клиентов.

332. after some beating about the bush — после разговоров не по существу.

was that all washed up (разг.) — все уже закончилось.

334. Lexington Avenue — Лексингтон-авеню (в Нью-Йорке), находится в центральной части Манхэттана, названа в честь поселка в штате Массачусетс, где произошло столкновение между английскими регулярными войсками и североамериканскими повстанцами, ставшее началом Войны за независимость (1775—1883).

335. the catch (сленг) — подвох.

338. hell broke loose (разг.) — разразился скандал.

339. kicking about (разг.) — болтаешь.

Rosewater's dupe — сентиментальная дура.

340. gives us a run-around — отделается туманными объяснениями.

343. Mrs. Astor — Миссис Роберт Шоу, виконтесса Уолдорф Астор (1879—1964), урожденная Нэнси Лэнгхорн, родилась в США; была первой женщиной-депутатом в Палате общин в Великобритании, славилась своими приемами, где, как говорили, «делалась большая политика», решались государственные дела. Здесь упоминается иронически.

344. thataway (диал.) — таким же образом.

son of a gun — эвфемизм от выражения son of a bitch — сукин сын.

shoot the works (сленг) — приложить все свои усилия, сделать все возможное.

lit out (сленг) — поспешно уехал.

345. **heavy-money** (сленг) — *зд.* большие деньги; также возможны синонимичные сленгизмы *heavy sugar, dough, jack.*

**the Paris Herald** — Имеется в виду парижское издание американской газеты «Геральд трибюн».

**a bunch** — *зд.* часть.

**right off the bat** (разг.) — немедленно.

**berries** (сленг) — доллары.

346. **he gets a bad break** (сленг) — ему крупно не везет.

**to tip off** (разг.) — передать информацию.

348. **bum steer** (сленг) — неверный ключ (к разгадке).

**put himself in solid with her by taking a poke at you** — добиться ее расположения, бросившись на тебя.

**an ex-con** (сленг) — бывший преступник.

349. **for fair** — *зд.* честное слово; ей-богу!

**he was out and away like a streak** — *зд.* он выскочил и молниеносно удрал.

**to bat** (разг.) — стукнуть.

350. **That mugg gets me** (сленг) — Этот парень действует мне на нервы.

**getting you out of the soup** — помочь тебе выйти из затруднительного положения.

354. **It's anybody's guess** — понятия не имею.

352. **sent him on a wild-goose chase** — отправил его заниматься бесполезными поисками.

363. **I couldn't get as much as a grunt out of him** (шутл.) — я ничего от него не добился.

369. **We're sicking accountants** — *зд.* Мы заставим бухгалтеров (проверить).

370. **where-were-you-on-the-night-of-June-6, 1894-stuff** — *зд.* все эти дурацкие вопросы типа: «Где вы были ночью 6 июня 1894 г.?»

**are making shavings of it** — *зд.* снимают, соскабливают (кровь).

372. **weaken on him** — *зд.* охладел к нему.



373. **gummed that up** (сленг) — испортил все дело.

374. **ran out on us** — убежал от нас.

**beat it out of town** (сленг) — убраться из города.

### Fly Paper

378. **grifters** (сленг) — мошенники.

**Hymie the Riveter** — Хайми «Взломщик»; ср.: **to rivet** — клепать, расклепывать; **rivets** (жарг.) — деньги.

379. **Chi** (сленг) — Чикаго.

**hitch** (жарг.) — срок.

**Leavenworth** — Ливенворт, основанная в 1895 г. федеральная тюрьма на северо-востоке штата Канзас.

380. **a journal** — зд. протокол, отчет.

383. **duck soup** (сленг) — легкая добыча, простак.

**ych** (вульг.) = yes.

**Take the air. Dangle.** (сленг) — Убирайся! Проваливай.

384. **I'd give it a whirl** (разг.) — Я бы провернул это дело.

**right off the reel** (амер.) — без колебаний, немедленно.

**send-a-man stuff** — зд. получится так, что пришлют человека.

**on the fire** (сленг) — обдумывая.

385. **to take you both in** (сленг) — задерживать, арестовать вас обоих.

**to be dummied up** (сленг) — отказываться говорить, давать показания.

**the St Martin** — название гостиницы.

**Hop to it** (сленг) — Валяй!

**twist** (сленг) — девушка, женщина.

**hunting for newspaper space** — очень хочет попасть в газеты.

386. **glaumed** (сленг) — См. коммент. к с. 304.

**Who's he mobbed up with?** (сленг) — С кем он в одной шайке?

**We've got them cold** — зд. Мы их до смерти напугали.

**cut up on you** (разг.) — валять дурака.

387. **I'd just as leave stand the rap** (сленг) — я бы понес наказание.

**what's dealt you — зд.** что тебе дано.

**op (сленг) = operative.**

**388. What sort of looking girl is she? (разг.)** — Как она выглядит?

**390. some = somewhat.**

**Seddons** — намек на известное дело об убийстве в 1912 г. супругами Седдон своей пожилой квартирантки мисс Барроу, которую они отравили. Фредерик Седдон был казнен, но жену оправдали (во многом благодаря умелой защите адвоката Маршалла Холла).

**392. to play ball (сленг)** — сотрудничать.

**393. to ditch — зд.** покинуть, бросить.

**I've been shatting on my uppers (сленг)** — Я сижу без денег.

**397. Sixth and Mission — зд.** пересечение 6-ой улицы и Мишн-стрит.

**was on fire for him — зд.** полиция Сан-Франциско жаждала поймать его.

**a rattler (сленг)** — железная дорога, «железка».

**to lie low — затаиться.**

**to powder (сленг)** — бежать, скрываться.

**If he was high-tailing (сленг)** — Если он быстро бежит.

**398. S.P.yards = South Pacific yards. South Pacific —** Южно-Океанская; название железнодорожной компании.

**cut down (сленг)** — убил, убрал.

**399. hold him in — зд.** покараулим (to hold in — контролировать действия).

**401. It stands to reason —** Весьма логично.

**I was being cut in on it —** В этом деле я имела свою долю.

**the bees (сленг)** — деньги; пример рифмованного сленга: bees and honey = money (второй компонент образования обычно не употребляется).

**402. meal ticket (сленг)** — человек, от которого зависят другие в финансовом отношении; ср.: русск. «дойная корова».

**He pulled plenty of dumb ones (жарг.)** — Совершил много глупостей.

**wisenheimer (сленг)** — самоуверенный, нахальный, наглый.

**You make angels out of it** — игра слов. На воровском жаргоне *angel* имеет значение «жертва вора или мошенника».

**403. gum (сленг)** — испортить.

**to dummy up (сленг)** — отказываться давать показания.

**Ho-hum** — восклицание, означающее усталость, скуку или презрение; ср.: *русск.* эх, уф.

**We gave her a pretty good ride at that, for a short one** — *эд.* Мы с ней поработали неплохо, хоть и недолго.

**the goose that was going to lay nice yellow eggs** — парадокс выражения **to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs** — т. е. уничтожить главную причину дохода или успеха. Выражение из басни Эзопа, где хозяин птицы убивает ее, чтобы завладеть всеми золотыми яйцами, которые, он думает, находятся у нее внутри.

**404. on a tip** — *эд.* имея информацию.

**the Embarcadero** — Эмбаркадеро, набережная в Сан-Франциско, вдоль которой швартуются пассажирские суда.

**you got your flag up** — В американских такси имеется специальный флажок, указывающий, свободна или занята машина. Если флажок поднят, такси свободно.

**405. failed to dodge a chop of the gun, caught it square on the top of the noodle** — *эд.* не удалось увернуться от удара пистолетом, пришедшегося прямо по макушке.

**406. raised hell** — *эд.* со страшным грохотом.

**drop (сленг)** — убью.

**put you down** — *эд.* я уложу.

**I'm no Annie Oakley** — Имеется в виду известная в Америке рубежа столетий женщина-снайпер Энни Оукли (1860—1926); в одном из своих самых знаменитых номеров она успевала выпустить полную обойму в подброшенную в воздух карту.

**give it a whirl (разг.)** — Посмотри, что будет.

**407. bo (сленг)** = man; употребляется в обращении к незнакомому человеку.

**you're tooting the wrong ringer (сленг)** — *эд.* обращаешься не по адресу; *ringer* — лошадь, участвующая в состязании.

**you gave her the goog (сленг)** — подбил ей глаз.

408. a croaker (сленг) — врач.

it's not a hell of a while — зд. очень скоро.

kicks off (сленг) — умирает.

jungled up (сленг) — обитает.

a boiler (сленг) — машина, обычно старая и в плохом состоянии.

cut for (сленг) — бросился, направился.

hammer and saws — зд. рабочие, строители.

China Basin — Китайская бухта.

being ranked (сленг) — меня изводил.

For Hire flag hadn't been up — Если бы только флажок не был поднят (см. коммент. к с. 404).

409. am I doing barbering (сленг) — занимаюсь трепом.

take it on the heel and toe (сленг) — убраться отсюда.

I'm through spitting (сленг) — я кончил болтать.

put on the mat (сленг) — вызвать для объяснений.

all in (разг.) — истощающие.

410. on the nut (сленг) — ведал финансами.

tumbled to their plan (разг.) — разгадал их план.

411. If there's nothing else on tap (разг.) — Если никаких других дел нет.

Fatimas — название сигарет.

That clicks. — зд. Все сходится.

### The Gatewood Caper

413. bowed me in and bowed himself out — проводил меня с поклоном и с поклоном вышел.

bruiser of a man — человек, похожий на боксера-профессионала.

twelves — 12-ый номер обуви (соответствует нашему 45-му).

414. clubbed — зд. вынуждали.

415. second men — помощники дворецкого.

416. a decoy — зд. тот, кто поможет распутать дело; ср.: a decoy — человек, вовлекающий другого в западню, ловушку.

the job (сленг) — зд. дело.

419. elbows (сленг) — полицейские, детективы.

420. to turn in a call — *зд.* позвонить.

roughshod — *зд.* без помех.

chunky — плотный.

421. stifflegged — с онемевшими ногами.

mouth of an alley — вход в переулок.

422. walking beat (*разг.*) — пешее патрулирование.

423. bullheadedness — упрямство.

424. stalled — *зд.* уклончиво отделался.

to canvass — *зд.* опросить.

my luck was hitting on all cylinders (*шутл.*) — *зд.* моя удача жала на все катушки.

426. a con man (*разг.*) — мошенник.

427. you've raised hell — *зд.* поднял шум; to raise hell также имеет значения: буянить, скандалить, устроить скандал, учинить разнос, обругать и т.д.

428. rap to it (*сленг*) — понять это.

without tipping her mitt (*сленг*) — не раскрыв своего секрета (плана, мотива и т.д.).

there was an even chance — была и равная возможность.

429. a skinful of hop (*сленг*) — большое количество наркотиков.

gumming the works (*сленг*) — испортить все дело.

what she had on him — что она про него знала.

*Е.С.Бурмистров*

**Дэшил Хеммет**

**ИЗБРАННОЕ**

*На английском языке*

**Сборник**

**Составитель**

**Георгий Андреевич Анджапаридзе**

**Издательский редактор** *В. Я. Бонар*  
**Художественный редактор** *Т. В. Иващенко*  
**Технический редактор** *А. П. Пряникова*  
**Корректоры** *Л. В. Данинбург, Е. В. Солнцева*

**ИБ № 2257**

Сдано в набор 24.09.84. Подписано в печать 13.06.85. Формат 84 × 108<sup>1</sup>/<sub>32</sub>.  
Бумага тип. № 1. Гарнитура Гaramонд. Печать высокая. Прив. печ. л. 25,62.  
Усл. кр.-отт. 25,62. Уч.-изд. л. 26,75. Тираж 33 200 экз. Заказ № 01584.  
Цена 2 р. 80 к. Изд. № 1632.

Издательство «Радуга» Государственного комитета СССР по делам издательств, полиграфии и книжной торговли. Москва, 119859, Зубовский бульвар, 17.

Ордена Трудового Красного Знамени Московская типография № 7 «Искра революции» Союзполиграфпрома Государственного комитета СССР по делам издательств, полиграфии и книжной торговли. Москва, 103001, Трехпрудный пер., 9.



